

In 2014, Liberia made a minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. During the last half of 2014, the Government had to redirect most of its resources to address an outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD). Thousands of children became ill or lost parents during the outbreak and schools were closed from June through the end of the reporting period in December. Despite the EVD outbreak, the Government sponsored trafficking in persons trainings for law enforcement officers and community leaders. The Child Protection Network developed a 6-month strategic plan to respond to vulnerable group of children in post-Ebola Liberia. However, children in Liberia are engaged in child labor, including in agriculture and mining. The Government has yet to pass into law the Decent Work Bill, which prohibits hazardous occupations and activities for children, and child labor law enforcement efforts are still inadequate.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Liberia are engaged in child labor, including in agriculture and mining.(1, 2) On some rubber plantations, children are employed to tap rubber trees, clear brush, and carry buckets.(2) Children also mine natural resources, including alluvial diamonds.(1-3) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Liberia.

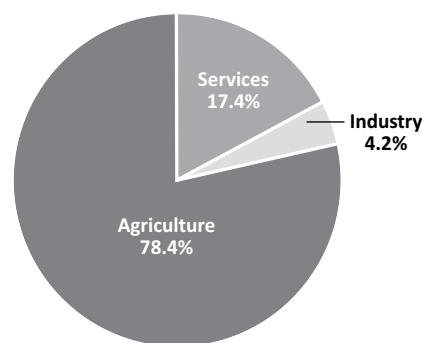
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

| Children | Age | Percent |
|-------------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Working (% and population) | 5-14 yrs. | 16.6 (136,340) |
| Attending School (%) | 5-14 yrs. | 75.9 |
| Combining Work and School (%) | 7-14 yrs. | 14.0 |
| Primary Completion Rate (%) | | 65.2 |

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2011, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2014.(4)

Source for all other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from Labour Force Survey, 2010.(5)

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 rubber (2, 6, 7) |
| | Farming activities,* including production of cocoa,* coffee,* and cassava* (6-10) |
| | Mining for diamonds and gold* (1-3, 6, 8, 11) |
| Industry | Production of charcoal* (7) |
| | Cutting and crushing stone* (3, 6, 8, 9, 12, 13) |
| | Construction, including building houses* (3, 14) |
| | Domestic work* (3, 12, 13) |
| Services | Working in hotels and restaurants* (9) |
| | Street work,* including vending* and begging* (3, 7, 12, 14-16) |
| | Repairing motor vehicles* (9) |

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

| Sector/Industry | Activity |
|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor† | Used in illicit activities, including selling drugs* (3, 17) |
| | Forced labor in domestic work,* street vending,* farming,* and begging* each as a result of human trafficking (3, 17-21) |
| | Commercial sexual exploitation,* sometimes as a result of human trafficking* (21) |

* 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.







Children are trafficked within Liberia and are subject to commercial sexual exploitation, domestic work, forced begging, and forced labor in street vending, alluvial diamond mines, and on rubber plantations. Children are also trafficked from Liberia to Cote d’Ivoire, Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria.(21) Although the Children’s Law provides for free primary education, in practice, many schools charge fees, which may prevent some children from attending school.(7) The limited number of schools in some areas also impedes access to education and increases the risk of children engaging in the worst forms of child labor.(20, 22) Sources indicate that sexual abuse by male teachers in schools may be a barrier to girls’ education.(10, 23, 24) Liberian parents are required by law to register their infants within 14 days of birth.(25) However, fewer than 5 percent of births are registered. Unable to prove citizenship, nonregistered children may have difficulty accessing education as some schools in Liberia require a child’s birth certificate to facilitate enrollment.(26, 27, 28)

In 2014, Liberia suffered from an Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) outbreak that resulted in numerous deaths.(29) To minimize the spread of the EVD, the Government issued policies to reduce person-to-person contact, especially group gatherings.(30) The Government also responded to the EVD outbreak by increasing the number of health screening check points and imposing travel restrictions.(31) The EVD outbreak may have impacted the Government’s ability to address the worst forms of child labor.

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

Liberia has ratified some 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, 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 74 of the Labor Law (13, 32) |
| Minimum Age for Hazardous Work | Yes | 18 | Article 7, Section 9.1 of the Children’s Law (12, 33) |
| Prohibition of Hazardous Occupations or Activities for Children | No | | |
| Prohibition of Forced Labor | Yes | | Article 12 of the Constitution (12, 34) |
| Prohibition of Child Trafficking | Yes | | Article 7, Section 8 of the Children’s Law; Section 5 of Act to Ban Trafficking in Persons (33, 35) |

Table 4. Laws and Regulations Related to Child Labor (cont)

| Standard | Yes/No | Age | Related Legislation |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|--------|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children | Yes | | Article 3, Section 21 of the Children's Law; Chapter 18, Sections 18.1-18.5 and Chapter 50, Section 50.1 of the Penal Law (33) |
| Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities | Yes | | Chapter 16 of the Penal Law (36) |
| Minimum Age for Compulsory Military Recruitment | N/A* | | |
| Minimum Age for Voluntary Military Service | Yes | 18 | Article 3, Section 22 of the Children's Law (33, 37) |
| Compulsory Education Age | Yes | 15 | Article 3, Section 9 of the Children's Law; Chapter 4 of the Education Reform Act (8, 33, 38) |
| Free Public Education | Yes | | Article 3, Section 9 of the Children's Law (33) |

*No conscription (37)

Section 74 of the Labor Law minimally penalizes offenders with a fine of 100 Liberian dollars for violating the minimum age provision.(32) In addition, Liberia currently does not have any prohibitions on hazardous work for children. However, the Decent Work Bill, introduced in 2010, is still being reviewed by the House of Representatives and should address hazardous work prohibitions for children.(7, 39)

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 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ministry of Labor (MOL) | Enforce labor laws, including child labor laws.(8) |
| Ministry of Justice's Women and Children Protection Section (WCPS) | Enforce laws relating to violations involving the worst forms of child labor, including human trafficking.(40) |
| Liberian National Police's Anti-Trafficking Unit | Ensure human trafficking training is integrated into police orientation to train officers on the effective enforcement of anti-human trafficking laws.(27) |
| Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization (BIN) | Enforce human trafficking laws in external cases.(8) |
| Liberian Transnational Crime Unit | Coordinate responses to international organized crime, including monitoring and prosecuting criminal violations involving the worst forms of child labor, including human trafficking.(41) |

Law enforcement agencies in Liberia took actions to combat child labor, including its worst forms.

Labor Law Enforcement

The National Commission on Child Labor (NACOMAL) and several ministries, including the Ministry of Labor (MOL), perform child labor investigations. However, the NACOMAL's budget and number of staff devoted solely to child labor issues are inadequate.(42) The MOL employed 54 officials to work on labor issues consisting of 1 inspector general, 14 labor commissioners, and 39 labor inspectors. Inspectors conducted unannounced inspections of construction companies and private businesses.(42)

The labor inspectorate does not have the authority to issue penalties, but rather refers suspected violations to prosecutors. In 2014, no child labor violations were reported but child labor cases are sometimes investigated and prosecuted as child endangerment under the penal code.(42)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2014, the Government of Liberia sponsored trafficking in persons trainings for law enforcement officers and community leaders.(43) All section heads of the Liberian National Police (LNP) received basic training on how to report suspected human

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trafficking cases.(21) However, evidence indicates that the number of investigators, investigations, and prosecutions are inadequate. The Women and Children Protection Section (WCPS) employs 210 officers stationed throughout the country. The WCPS and the LNP reported that funding for operations was insufficient during the year.(42) Reports indicate that the LNP lacks vehicles, fuel, a communication mechanism, and investigative equipment to carry out investigations.(44) In addition, research did not find information about the number of inspections conducted, convictions, or implementation of penalties related to the worst forms of child labor in 2014.(42)

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

The Government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor, including its worst forms (Table 6).

Table 6. Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

| Coordinating Body | Role & Description |
|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| National Commission on Child Labor (NACOMAL) | Monitor child labor issues and develop child labor policies. Led by the MOL, it comprises of representatives from 16 organizations, including NGOs and international and civil society organizations.(45) Objectives include reforming national child labor laws and creating a national child labor database to assist with conducting surveys to determine the magnitude of the child labor issue in the country.(45) |
| National Steering Committee (NSC) on Child Labor | Advocate eliminating child labor, especially its worst forms. Chaired by the MOL, it comprises of NACOMAL, government ministries, private sector representatives, and NGOs.(7) Objectives include Liberia's ratification of ILO C. 138.(7) The MOL, in collaboration with the IOM and UNICEF, organized two workshops. The first workshop, held in May, was a 2-day child labor reporting training with a legal analysis component; the second, held in July, was a 5-day strategic planning meeting of the NSC.(42) The NSC met quarterly during the reporting period.(42) |
| Child Protection Network | Coordinate child protection efforts through monthly meetings to discuss child protection issues, including child labor and human trafficking. Chaired by the Ministry of Gender and Development, is comprises of the MOL, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, the WCPS, the National Police, civil society organizations, and several NGOs.(3) Also responsible for coordinating referrals for provision of services to child victims, with support from international and national organizations.(8, 13) In addition, manage seven community child welfare committees in different counties that monitor children's issues at the community level and make referrals to other organizations.(13) During the year, the Child Protection Network developed a 6-month strategic plan to respond to vulnerable groups of children in post-Ebola Liberia.(42) |
| Anti-Human-Trafficking Task Force | Coordinate anti-human trafficking activities. Chaired by the MOL and includes the Commissioner of BIN, the LNP, and representatives from the Ministries of Justice, Foreign Affairs, and Internal Affairs. (8) During the year, the Government allocated \$151,520 for purchasing supplies and a vehicle, and for anti-human trafficking activities administered through the national coordinating body. The anti-human trafficking activities included trafficking in persons outreach and, training activities for law enforcement officers and community leaders.(10, 44) |

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

The Government of Liberia has established policies related to child labor, including its worst forms (Table 7).

Table 7. Policies Related to Child Labor

| Policy | Description |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| National Action Plan for Trafficking in Personst | Outlines the Government's comprehensive anti-human trafficking efforts, including for child victims.(8) The Government affirmed its commitment to the Anti-Human Trafficking 5-Year National Action Plan and allocated \$152,000 to fund its implementation.(19) |
| Direct Assistance and Support to Trafficked Victims Standard Operation Procedures | Establishes roles and responsibilities for coordinating government assistance to human trafficking victims.(27) |
| National Social Welfare Policy | Prioritizes the development of action plans and policies that target children engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including child trafficking.(46) |
| National Employment Policy* | Aims to provide vocational training for youth.(46) |
| Rubber Industry Master Plan (2010–2040)* | Prioritizes the development of the rubber industry and includes provisions for improving workers' standard of living, access to credit, and children's access to education.(47) |
| Education Sector Plan (2010–2020)* | Aims to improve the education infrastructure, as well as the access to and quality of primary education.(48) |

Table 7. Policies Related to Child Labor (cont)

| Policy | Description |
|-------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Education Sector HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan (2010–2014)* | Aims to provide education to vulnerable children affected by HIV/AIDS.(49) |
| 2030 Vision Policy (2012–2017)* | Outlines the Government of Liberia's goal to become a middle income country by 2030, by increasing focus on education and livelihoods.(15, 50) |
| Revised National Youth Policy (2012–2017)* | Outlines the Government of Liberia's National Youth Policy, which includes employment and education components.(51–53) |

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

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

In 2014, the Liberian House and Senate passed the Liberia Youth Act, which was formerly a policy called the National Youth Policy. Currently it awaits approval from the President.(52, 53)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2014, the Government of Liberia participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor, including its worst forms. The Government has other programs that may have an impact on child labor, including its worst forms (Table 8).

Table 8. Social Programs to Address Child Labor

| Program | Description |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Anti-Trafficking Awareness Campaign† | Government of Liberia MOL program that uses radio and billboard messages to raise public awareness on human trafficking.(10, 27) |
| Liberia Agriculture Investment Program* | \$175 million multi-donor program that aims to enhance household livelihoods in the agriculture sector by building linkages with markets and improving rural infrastructure, which may have a positive effect on reducing child labor.(54) |
| Actions to Reduce Child Labor in Areas of Rubber Production (2012–2016) | \$6 million, USDOL-funded, 4-year project implemented by Winrock International to combat child labor in the rubber sector.(17) Aims to withdraw or prevent 10,100 children from engaging in the worst forms of child labor by providing education, as well as livelihoods support to 3,700 vulnerable families. Implemented in collaboration with local rubber companies.(17) |
| Global Action Program on Child Labor Issues Project (2011–2015) | USDOL-funded project implemented by the ILO in approximately 40 countries to support the priorities of the Roadmap for Achieving the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor by 2016 established by the Hague Global Child Labor Conference in 2010. Aims to build the capacity of the national government and develop strategic policies to address the elimination of child labor and forced labor in Liberia. (55) |
| Eliminating the Worst Forms of Child Labor in West Africa and Strengthening Sub-Regional Cooperation through ECOWAS I & II | USDOL-funded regional projects that supported ECOWAS to strengthen its role in combating the worst forms of child labor in the West Africa sub-region by providing policy and capacity building support for all ECOWAS states.(56) |
| Social Cash Transfer Program* | EU-funded program that provides regular payments to poor and “labor constrained” households in Bomi County, along with other counties. Labor constrained households include households in which the majority of household members are unable to work for reasons such as disability.(57) Targets 5,000 households, and each beneficiary household receives between \$10 and \$25 per month.(57) |
| Educating and Protecting Vulnerable Children in Family Settings Project (2010–2014)* | USAID, in partnership with Save the Children Fund UK, aims to enhance the protection systems for vulnerable children especially those who received inadequate prenatal care by providing children with access to primary education and health services and ensuring that social and health services are delivered to children through partnership with civil society and the.(58) |
| Fast Track Initiative Grant for Basic Education * | \$40 million, World Bank-funded project that aims to improve primary education access and quality. (59, 60) |
| Feed the Future Project (2011–2015)* | \$75 million, USAID-funded project that aims to improve food security and nutrition among vulnerable populations.(61, 62) |
| Refugee Camps and Services (2012–2015)* | \$42.5 million, UN High Commissioner for Refugees-funded project that maintains refugee camps and provides essential services to Ivorian refugees, including children.(63, 64) |

* The impact of this program on child labor does not appear to have been studied.

‡ Program is funded by the Government of Liberia.

Although Liberia has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem.

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 Liberia (Table 9).

Table 9. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor, Including its Worst Forms

| Area | Suggested Action | Year(s) Suggested |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Legal Framework | Ratify the UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography. | 2013 – 2014 |
| | Ensure that penalties for violating the employment minimum age requirements are sufficient to deter child labor violations. | 2014 |
| | Ensure that hazardous occupations and activities are prohibited for children. | 2010 – 2014 |
| Enforcement | Fully fund child labor enforcement mechanisms and prosecution efforts, such as the MOL, the WCPS, and the Anti-Human-Trafficking Task Force, and provide necessary training for such officials to enforce child labor laws. | 2010 – 2014 |
| | Publish data on inspections, violations, citations, and penalties assessed for the worst forms of child labor. | 2010 – 2014 |
| | Ensure there are an adequate number of labor inspectors to effectively enforce child labor laws. | 2013 – 2014 |
| Government Policies | Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into existing education and youth policies. | 2010 – 2014 |
| Social Programs | Conduct research to determine the activities carried out by children working in farming and construction to inform policies and programs. | 2013 – 2014 |
| | Improve access to education by building additional schools, ensuring children are registered at birth, addressing sexual abuse in schools, and subsidizing the cost of school fees. | 2012 – 2014 |
| | Assess and evaluate the impact that existing social programs may have on addressing child labor. | 2010 – 2014 |
| | Increase the scope of existing social programs to reach more children at risk of or engaged in the worst forms of child labor. | 2009 – 2014 |

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