

In 2014, Sierra Leone made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government ratified the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons, and funded and designated some members for the National Commission for Children. The Government also increased the number of labor officers and factory inspectors, and participated in social programs to address child labor and child trafficking. However, children in Sierra Leone continue to engage in child labor, including in agriculture and in the worst forms of child labor, including in mining. Sierra Leone's laws do not adequately protect children from involvement in hazardous work and the country does not have an approved national action plan on child labor. During the last half of 2014, the Government had to re-direct 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 December.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Sierra Leone are engaged in child labor, including in agriculture.⁽¹⁾ Children are also engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including in mining. Children working in the mining sector load, carry, and wash and sieve gravel.⁽¹⁾ Other children in this sector hawk or deliver goods, perform errands, or are exploited in commercial sexual exploitation.⁽¹⁾

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Sierra Leone.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5-14 yrs.	51.3 (897,142)
Attending School (%)	5-14 yrs.	67.0
Combining Work and School (%)	7-14 yrs.	43.3
Primary Completion Rate (%)		72.4

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2012, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2015.⁽²⁾

Source for all other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from the Demographic and Health Survey, 2013.⁽³⁾

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 coffee, cocoa, and palm oil (4-6)
	Fishing,* including deep-sea fishing,*† mending nets, and working on boats in the open sea† (1, 7-9)
	Farming, including planting, weeding and harvesting (1)
	Forestry, activities unknown (10)
Industry	Mining† for alluvial diamonds, sand,* gold,* including loading gravel in sacks or basins, carrying sacks on their heads, washing, and sieving (1, 7, 11, 12)
	Quarrying† and crushing stone, including granite, breaking rock, shoveling, and transporting gravel* (9, 11, 13, 14)
	Construction, activities unknown (10)
	Manufacturing,† activities unknown (10)
Services	Scavenging scrap metals and recyclable materials from dumpsites (1, 7, 11, 15)
	Domestic work (1, 7)
	Street work, including begging, trading and selling goods (1, 9, 12, 16)

Sierra Leone

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

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

Sector/Industry	Activity
Services	Portering,† including carrying heavy loads (1, 11)
	Working as apprentices,* including in auto-repair shops and on transportation vehicles (<i>poda poda</i>) (1)
	Begging as a result of human trafficking (1, 7, 17)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced domestic work sometimes as a result of human trafficking (18)
	Forced stealing (1, 11)
	Commercial sexual exploitation sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1, 11, 12, 17)
	Forced labor at granite and alluvial diamond mines, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1, 11, 12, 17)

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

† 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.

Sierra Leone is a source, transit and destination country for children trafficked for the purposes of forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation.(9) Children are mostly trafficked to urban areas for sexual exploitation, domestic work and petty trading.(9) Children are also trafficked internally for forced labor in agriculture, fishing, diamond mines, and begging. Reports suggest that children from Sierra Leone may also be trafficked to Nigeria, The Gambia, Côte d’Ivoire, Liberia, Guinea Bissau and Guinea for forced labor and forced prostitution.(9) Children from Nigeria, Liberia and Guinea are trafficked to Sierra Leone for begging, mining, portering, and commercial sexual exploitation.(9)




According to the Education Act, the Government has established the right to free primary education.(19) However, in practice, families pay for their children’s uniforms, supplies, transportation and other school costs.(1, 11, 20) Some children work part-time in order to help cover these costs.(21) Other factors limit children’s access to education, including a lack of schools, early marriage and pregnancy, sexual abuse from teachers, and poor school conditions.(1, 11, 21-23) Although the Person with Disability Act prohibits discrimination in education, children with disabilities in Sierra Leone are less likely to attend school than other children due to discrimination and inadequate school facilities.(11, 23, 24)

According to a Government report, there were over 2,800 deaths due to Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) in Sierra Leone from May to December 2014.(25) More than 16,000 children were negatively impacted by EVD, including approximately 8,000 who lost parents to the disease.(18) Reports indicate that many children also began working during this time to help their families.(26, 27) The Government of Sierra Leone closed schools from June to December to prevent the spread of Ebola and redirected most of its resources to address the outbreak.(9, 28, 29) The Government also established interim centers to provide care to children orphaned by Ebola and took steps to prevent child trafficking as a result of the crisis.(18)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

Sierra Leone 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 ratified the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons in 2014.(9, 30)

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	15	Section 125 of the Child Right Act, 2007; Section 52 of Chapter 212, Employers and Employed Act, 1960 (31, 32)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Section 126 and 128 (3) of the Child Right Act, 2007; Section 47-51 and 53-56 of Chapter 212, Employers and Employed Act, 1960 (31, 32)
Prohibition of Hazardous Occupations or Activities for Children	Yes		Section 128 of the Child Right Act, 2007; Sections 47-51 and 53-56 of Chapter 212, Employers and Employed Act, 1960; Sections 164 and 170 of the Mines and Minerals Act, 2009 (31-33)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Section 19 of the Constitution of Sierra Leone, 1991 (34)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Part II, Section 2 of the Anti-Human Trafficking Act, 2005; Section 60 of the Child Right Act, 2007 (31, 35)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Sections 19-34 of the Sexual Offenses Act, 2012; Part II, Section 2 of the Anti-Human Trafficking Act, 2005 (35, 36)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Sections 7 and 13 of the National Drugs Control Act, 2008 (37)
Minimum Age for Compulsory Military Recruitment	N/A*		
Minimum Age for Voluntary Military Service	Yes	18	Section 28 of the Child Right Act, 2007 (31)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Section 3 of the Education Act, 2004; Section 125 of the Child Right Act, 2007 (19, 31)
Free Public Education	Yes		Section 3 of the Education Act, 2004; Section 9 of the Constitution of Sierra Leone; Section 11(c) of the Child Right Act, 2007 (19, 31, 34)

* No conscription (38)

Sierra Leone's laws contain conflicting provisions regarding children's work and are not in line with ILO C. 138, which requires children to be at least 13 years of age to engage in light work, at least 14 years of age to work as apprentices, and to receive specific instruction or vocational training in order to engage in hazardous labor prior to the age of 18.(39) For example, Section 127 of the Child Right Act sets the minimum age for light work at 13 years; however, Section 51 of the Employers and Employed Act provides an exception for children under the age of 12 to be engaged in agricultural, horticultural or domestic light work for their parents, with government approval.(31, 32, 39) Section 135 of the Child Right Act sets the minimum age for apprenticeships at 15, but Section 57 of the Employers and Employed Act permits children age 13 and older to work as apprentices, with their consent and the permission of a parent or guardian.(31, 32, 39) Furthermore, Section 54 (2) of the Employers and Employed Act allows male children to participate in mining beginning at the age of 16, without receiving instruction or vocational training.(32, 39) In addition, Sierra Leone's labor laws prescribe fines that may neither reflect the present value of Sierra Leone's currency nor be commensurate with the severity of the crimes. For example, penalties for all violations of the Employers and Employed Act are liable to a fine of only 50 pounds or to imprisonment of six months.(1, 32) In 2014, the Government began reviewing its labor laws to address these issues and is considering whether to adopt a list of hazardous work prohibited to children under the age of 18.(14) The Government also began considering potential revisions to its Anti-Trafficking Law of 2005.(18)

Research did not find a law protecting children from involvement in illicit activities other than drug-related crimes.

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 Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA)	Enforce child labor law and monitor compliance with child labor regulations.(1, 7) Head National TIP Secretariat; develop and implement digitized database to track all TIP cases in Sierra Leone.(40)
Ministry of Labor and Social Security—Child Labor Unit (CLU)	Supervise implementation of ILO C. 138 and 182; and formulate, implement, and monitor compliance with child labor regulations.(7, 39)
District Councils	Enforce child labor laws in the informal sector.(1)
Village Child Welfare Committees	Promote awareness on child rights. Report child welfare concerns to village and government officials who are responsible for children's issues. Provide recommendations and instructions on the maintenance and support of specific village children. Address complaints and concerns of adults or children in the village.(15, 31)
Ministry of Mines and Mineral Resources	Enforce regulations against the use of child labor in mining and monitor the field. Has the authority to suspend licenses of mining operators who engage in child labor.(7)
Sierra Leone Police—Family Support Unit (FSU)	Investigate, prosecute and track statistics on various crimes, including child trafficking and child labor.(7, 15)
Transnational Organized Crime Unit (TOCU)	Provide statistics and information on cases of trafficking in persons (TIP). Responsible for enforcing human trafficking cases.(40)

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

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2014, the Ministry of Labor employed 3 Senior Labor Officers, 20 Labor Officers, 11 Factory Inspectors and four Labor Inspectors, an increase of 16 Labor officers and 4 Factory Inspectors from 2013. Three labor inspectors received training in 2014. (14) The Ministry of Mineral Resources had an estimated 350 Mines Monitors in 2014 to enforce regulations against the use of child labor in mining activities.(9) According to the Mines and Minerals Act, the Minister, after consultation with the Minerals Advisory Board, can revoke licenses from license holders who are found to be using child labor.(33) Research did not find information indicating any licenses were revoked in 2014.(14)

The Ministry of Labor is responsible for conducting both routine and complaint-based inspections. Inspections can be announced or unannounced.(14) The Government conducted only occupational safety and health (OSH) inspections in formal sector workplaces in 2014 and no child labor violations were found during these visits.(14) Research did not find information about the total number of OSH inspections conducted or whether the inspectorate has the authority to determine penalties for child labor violations. Despite an increase in personnel dedicated to labor inspection, the Government lacks a sufficient dedicated budget and other resources to effectively enforce labor laws.(41)

The Government has a mechanism to refer cases to police and other government agencies.(7) The Child Right Act requires the establishment of a child welfare committee (CWC) in every village, chiefdom and district. About 70 child welfare committees were in existence in Sierra Leone in 2014; however more need to be established to meet the requirements of the Act.(7)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2014, the Government raided brothels to enforce laws against commercial sexual exploitation and took steps to assist nine Sierra Leonean women and girls who reported working in Kuwait as domestic workers in conditions similar to slavery.(9, 18) The Family Support Unit of the Sierra Leone Police conducted two operations to withdraw children from street work and forced child labor. The first operation, was conducted nationwide, while the second, was a pilot project focusing on the East End of the capital. (9) However, adult perpetrators identified through the two operations were only provided with warnings.(9) Due to a lack of 'safe homes' and shelters, police officers in Sierra Leone who handle these types of operations will sometimes provide temporary housing to the victims in their own homes.(9)

During the reporting period, members of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces, the Sierra Leone Police, the Immigration Department, the Office of National Security and other personnel involved in trans-border operations, as well as union leaders, law

enforcement officers, personnel of the Ministry of Labor, and the TIP National Task Force and its stakeholders participated in TIP training.(18) Awareness campaigns were also held for youth, border guards, police, immigration officials, and other stakeholders on human trafficking and migrant smuggling.(18)

In 2013, police had investigated 24 cases of child trafficking nationwide and 163 cases of “child cruelty,” which included child labor-related offenses.(7, 40) In 2014, the majority of these cases were concluded; however, there were no trafficking convictions and research was unable to find information indicating how many of the 163 cases of “child cruelty” included child labor-related offenses.

The Government has a complaint line for issues related to child protection, but it is not targeted toward child labor.(7) In 2014, the Government upgraded its database to identify areas and sectors affected by human trafficking, as well as the related number of victims, prosecutions, and convictions. The database is expected to be operational in early 2015.(18) The TIP Task Force also began developing a National Referral Mechanism to better serve trafficking victims.(18)

Research did not find information regarding the number of criminal investigators in Sierra Leone. The Sierra Leone Police had no funding for investigating child labor issues, and reports indicate a lack of sufficient funding for office facilities, transportation, and fuel.(7, 11) Human trafficking cases are handled inefficiently by the courts and cases are often dropped before completion because of pressures and other difficult circumstances faced by victims.(18)

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 TIP Task Force	Coordinate the needs and requirements of agencies involved in providing shelter and services for victims, gather data on reported trafficking cases, and meet regularly to develop policy and address the issue of child trafficking.(7, 42) Task Force is headed by the MSWGCA and members include government ministries, NGOs, international organizations, and diplomatic missions.(15, 17) In 2014, the Anti-TIP Plan was being updated by the Government, but formal meetings of the task force were halted in November due to the Ebola crisis.(18)
National Technical Steering Committee on Child Labor	Meet on an ad-hoc basis to discuss major issues related to child labor as they arise.(7, 39)
National Commission for Children	Coordinate and exchange information in accordance with Child Right Act. Advise the government on ways to improve the condition and welfare of children in Sierra Leone.(31) In 2014, the Government allocated \$250,000 to the Commission and two Monitoring and Evaluation officers and two Child Protection officers were hired to help carry out its functions. However, the government has yet to name all its members.(14)

The National Technical Steering Committee on Child Labor did not meet during the reporting period.(14)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

The Government of Sierra Leone 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 on Human Trafficking	Includes strategies for coordination and monitoring by government agencies, prevention, victim identification, protection and referral, and training.(43) The Government updated this plan in 2014.(18)
Agenda for Prosperity (2013-2018)	Addresses child labor, including its worst forms, through expanded social welfare programs and strategies to improve education quality and access.(44)
Transitional Joint Vision For Sierra Leone of the United Nations Family (2013-2014)*	Includes strategies to increase school enrollment for vulnerable children and provide youth employment.(45)
Education Sector Plan (2014-2018)*†	Implements education law and includes provisions to increase access, equity, completion, quality, and relevance of basic education.(46)

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

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

Sierra Leone

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

The Government drafted a National Action Plan against the Worst Forms of Child Labor, but the plan has yet to be approved.(47)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2014, the Government of Sierra Leone participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor, including its worst forms. The Government participates in 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
Program to combat the recruitment of child soldiers and child soldier prevention programs in local schools	Child Soldier Initiative funded a 5-year program that provides child protection training for the police and army. Implements an education program, run by former child soldiers, in 45 schools across five districts of Sierra Leone to teach children about their legal rights, child soldiering and tactics used to recruit children.(48) The program aims to make child rights training mandatory for the local police and armed forces and outlines standards on how troops must engage with children in combat.(48)
Program to combat child trafficking and forced child labor in Sierra Leone	U.S. Department of State-funded two-year project implemented by World Hope International. Rescues and restores trafficking victims in a Trafficking in Persons Recovery Center and combats trafficking through awareness and education at the community level.(49)
Shelters	Government program that refers child trafficking victims to private shelters that house child victims of forced labor and trafficking.(18) In 2014, one shelter, operated by Don Bosco, provided services to 200 victims. However, an IOM shelter created in 2013 ceased operations and now only facilitates the repatriation of victims.(9)
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.(39, 50) Aims to build the capacity of the national Government and develop strategic policies to eliminate child labor. Planned activities for Sierra Leone were completed in 2014.(50)
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.(51, 52)
Tackling Child Labor through Education (TACKLE) project	Jointly launched by the European Commission and the ILO to combat child labor through education in 12 African and Caribbean countries and the Pacific group of states (ACP). Aims to strengthen institutional capacity to formulate and implement child labor strategies, and to conduct research and increase the knowledge base on child labor.(12)
Youth-to-Youth Fund*	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development-funded program implemented in partnership with ILO, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, and Youth Employment Network. Provides youth with financing for small-scale projects aimed at creating employment for young people through entrepreneurship.(53)
Revitalizing Education Development in Sierra Leone (2014-2017)*	\$23.4 million World Bank-funded project that aims to improve education access, equity, completion, quality, and learning outcomes; and to strengthen educational systems in Sierra Leone. Due to the Ebola crisis, project activities did not begin in 2014.(54)
Youth Empowerment and Employment Program (2011-2014)*	\$600,000 UNDP-funded, 4-year program that strengthens national policy, strategy, and coordination for youth employment and seeks to provide basic support services for youth in Sierra Leone, including business development and career advice and guidance. The program provided assistance to 200 youth-led businesses and 400 youth through training and by providing them with inputs and services to establish their own agri-businesses.(55)
UNICEF Country Program*	Works to increase access to basic education, health care and other children's needs. In 2014, worked with the Government to draft a new education sector plan, develop a new national strategy for reducing teen pregnancy, a child welfare strategy, and a strategy for child justice.(23) Provided cash transfers and uniform support to increase access to basic education.(23)

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

Sierra Leone has insufficient shelters and safe houses for children who have been withdrawn from working on the streets or in forced labor.(9)

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 Sierra Leone (Table 9).

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

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Approve the draft list of hazardous activities prohibited to children.	2014
	Harmonize laws related to light work, apprenticeships, and mining to ensure they are in line with ILO C. 138.	2013 – 2014
	Update labor laws to ensure that penalties are commensurate with the severity of violations.	2010 – 2014
	Ensure that children are prohibited from involvement in all illicit activities.	2014
Enforcement	Ensure adequate resources to enforce child labor laws.	2011 – 2014
	Conduct more civil and criminal enforcement of child labor, including more frequent child labor inspections and issuing citations for violations.	2013 – 2014
	Target child labor issues as part of the child protection complaint line.	2013 – 2014
	Provide police investigators adequate resources to effectively enforce the law.	2012 – 2014
	Make information publicly available about child-labor related inspections, and the number of child labor investigators and investigations.	2014
	Address inefficiencies within the judicial system in the handling of trafficking in persons cases.	2014
	Complete set up of Child Welfare Committees.	2014
Coordination	Convene more regular meetings of the National Technical Steering Committee on Child Labor.	2014
	Fully establish the National Commission for Children by designating members in accordance with Child Right Act requirements.	2014
Policies	Adopt the National Action Plan against the Worst Forms of Child Labor.	2014
Social Programs	Assess the impact of existing social programs on reducing the worst forms of child labor.	2011 – 2014
	Address barriers to education, including school fees, transportation, infrastructure, violence, early pregnancy, and access for children with disabilities.	2013 – 2014
	Ensure the availability of shelters and safe houses for children removed from street work, and victims of forced labor.	2009 – 2014

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