

In 2013, Mauritius made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government continued its efforts to combat commercial sexual exploitation of children by providing services via its Child Development Unit and operating drop-in centers. In addition, the Government increased efforts to improve the social safety net for vulnerable families through its Social Aid and Income Support Programs, and boosted funding to increase children's access to quality education through programs such as the Education Priority Zones (Zones d'Education Prioritaire) (ZEP). However, children in Mauritius continue to engage in the worst forms of child labor, primarily in commercial sexual exploitation, although the extent of the problem is unknown. The Government does not currently ensure that victims of commercial sexual exploitation have access to comprehensive, quality services.

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



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Mauritius are engaged in the worst forms of child labor, primarily in commercial sexual exploitation (CSEC), although the extent of the problem is unknown.(1-3) 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)	5-14 yrs.	Unavailable
Attending School (%)	5-14 yrs.	Unavailable
Combining Work and School (%)	7-14 yrs.	Unavailable
Primary Completion Rate (%)		99.3

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2012, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2014.(4)

Source for all other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis, 2014.(5)

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	Agriculture, activities unknown* (1)
Services	Domestic service* (1)
	Work on the streets, activities unknown* (1)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation sometimes as a result of human trafficking* (1-3)

* 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.

Some children are lured into CSEC by their peers or through false offers of other employment. Some adult prostitutes force their sons and daughters into CSEC.(1, 2)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK ON THE WORST FORMS OF 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 relevant 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	18	Employment Rights Act (6)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Employment Rights Act (6)
List of Hazardous Occupations Prohibited for Children	Yes		Occupational Safety and Health Act (7)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Constitution (8)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Combating Trafficking in Persons Act (9)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Child Protection Act and Criminal Code (3, 10)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Child Protection Act (10)
Minimum Age for Compulsory Military Recruitment	N/A*		
Minimum Age for Voluntary Military Service	N/A*		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Education Act (11, 12)
Free Public Education	Yes		Education Act (11, 12)

* No conscription or no standing military.

The Government continues to work on a comprehensive children's bill designed to harmonize current laws related to children and make sure they are in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.(1, 13)

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
Inspection and Enforcement Division of the Ministry of Labor, Industrial Relations, and Employment (MOLIRE)	Enforce all labor laws, including those related to child labor.(14)
Office of the Ombudsperson for Children	Investigate any suspected or reported case of child labor or violation of a child's rights.(15)
Police Brigade for the Protection of Minors (Minors' Brigade)	Patrol areas such as arcades, bus terminals, and other areas in which youth are vulnerable to involvement in commercial sexual exploitation.(3, 14) Maintain a database of all trafficking incidents of children and refer all cases of CSEC to the Child Development Unit (CDU).(2)

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

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare (MOGE) CDU	Enforce legislation related to children as well as implement policies and programs related to child development.(1) Receive tips on all forms of child abuse, including commercial sexual exploitation and child trafficking, through two telephone hotlines.(14) Provide follow-up assistance to victims.(16) Provide child welfare officers to accompany victims as they receive immediate medical care and work in conjunction with the police if an official statement is needed.(2) Develop a central database and standard operating procedures for sharing information and taking action to address child labor.(13)

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

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2013, the Ministry of Labor, Industrial Relations, and Employment's (MOLIRE) 45 labor inspectors conducted 1,722 labor inspections. During these inspections, three cases of child labor were detected.(1) The three children were found packaging flour into plastic bags, and the cases have been referred and remain pending in the courts.(1)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2013, four women and two men were arrested for child trafficking related to a possible child prostitution ring involving four girls in CSEC.(17) In 2013, 70 Government officials from a collection of agencies including the Police and Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare (MOGE) received training on preventing CSEC. In addition, more than 200 new police recruits received anti-trafficking in persons (TIP) training as part of basic training.(17) However, the Child Development Unit (CDU) suffers from a lack of resources and personnel, with only nine officers to serve Mauritius and one for Rodrigues Island, a Mauritius dependency, leading to insufficient detection of cases and service provision.(3) Reports from 2013 indicate that the Government has decreased anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts.(2)

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 Child Protection Committee (NCPC)	Coordinate the roles and responsibilities of the relevant ministries and ensure collaboration on effective intervention in cases involving children, including the worst forms of child labor. Also known as the Working Together Committee.(11, 13, 18)
National Children's Council (NCC)	Serve as the executive of child protection programs and focus on child protection issues in the country as an independent, para-governmental entity under the auspices of the MOGE.(3)
NCPC subcommittee on CSEC	Facilitate interagency coordination on CSEC.(18)

In 2013, significant overlap continues to exist between the committees involved in child protection issues, and the roles of the National Child Protection Committee (NCPC) and the National Children's Council (NCC) are unclear in coordinating efforts to combat the worst forms of child labor. A formal and permanent anti-trafficking in persons (TIP) coordinating body does not exist, and a lack of understanding of TIP by government officials has prevented the Government from effectively addressing the issue.(2, 19) Research was unable to determine if the NCPC subcommittee on CSEC is active or what activities it performs.

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

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

Table 7. Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
Protocol of Assistance to Victims of Sexual Abuse*	Lays out procedures for police and other officials to follow when handling sexual abuse cases, including commercial sexual exploitation.(14, 20)
Child Safety Online Action Plan*	Prevents sexual exploitation of children on the Internet by strengthening the legal framework and raising awareness among parents and children.(14, 16)
National Policy Paper on the Family*	Supports child welfare through holistic support for families, including job training for parents.(21)
Education and Human Resources Strategy Plan*	Improves equity of access to primary, secondary, and technical/vocational education, among other goals.(22)
UNDP Country Program for Mauritius†	Improves the education of vulnerable children through reducing inequality in opportunities.(23)

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

† Policy was launched during the reporting period.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

In 2013, the Government of Mauritius funded programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor, including its worst forms (Table 8).

Table 8. Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Income Support Program*‡	Government program provides money for 8,000 vulnerable families living below the Poverty Intervention Line. Has a 2014 budget of \$33 million.(1)
Social Aid Program*‡	Government program provides assistance to 20,000 families. Increased the allowance provided in 2014.(1)
Education Priority Zones (Zones d'Education Prioritaire) (ZEP) *‡	Government program combats social inequalities by providing equal opportunities to all primary school children throughout the country. Program has been shown to reduce school dropout rates through enhanced community participation in education.(11, 22) Providing increased funding for low-performing schools in 2014.(1)
Strategy for Special Education Needs and Inclusive Education Programs*‡	Government program for at-risk primary school students outside of school hours that focuses on physical education and the arts.(16)
Child Mentoring Scheme*‡	Government program provides one-on-one counseling to at-risk children through a government-selected mentor.(11, 24)
Summer and Winter School Program*‡	Government program provides Summer and Winter schooling to enhance the successful transition from primary to secondary school for students.(11, 14)
Second Chance Program*‡	Government program to educate and provide vocational training and life skills to those who dropped out after age 16.(11)
Awareness-Raising Programs in Schools, Community Centers, and in the Media on CSEC‡	Government program to educate the public on preventing sexual abuse and exploitation of children.(3, 11, 25)
Workshops on CSEC‡	Government holds workshops on CSEC with vulnerable groups.(3, 25)
Drop-in Centers‡	Government program provides counseling and referrals to victims of sexual abuse, including CSEC and trafficking of children.(26, 27)
Shelters and Institutional Care‡	Government program provides shelter and institutional care to victims who are referred to government or NGO shelters.(3, 26, 27)

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

‡ Program is funded by the Government of Mauritius.

The Government's institutional care facilities for victims of CSEC and other abuses are overcrowded, service providers are overtaxed and lack appropriate training, and institutions do not have appropriate standards of care, leading to inadequate service provision.(3) In addition, child victims of prostitution are sometimes placed by court order in residential centers for youth on probation. Child victims of prostitution placed in such facilities may not receive appropriate treatment.(3)

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 Mauritius (Table 9).

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

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Provide necessary resources to the CDU to ensure adequate enforcement and service delivery for victims.	2011 – 2013
	Increase investigations and prosecutions of CSEC crimes and punish offenders.	2010 – 2013
Coordination	Ensure that all government efforts to address the worst forms of child labor are coordinated by the NCPC and that any overlap in coordination is addressed.	2012 – 2013
	Establish a formal and permanent structure to coordinate anti-TIP efforts and increase anti-TIP training for government officials.	2012 – 2013
	Ensure the NCPC subcommittee on CSEC is active and addresses CSEC issues.	2013
Government Policies	Assess the impact that existing policies have had on the worst forms of child labor.	2010 – 2013
Social Programs	Conduct research to determine the activities carried out by children working in agriculture and on the street to inform policies and programs.	2013
	Assess the impact that existing programs may have on addressing child labor, particularly CSEC.	2009 – 2013
	Ensure that victims of CSEC have access to comprehensive, quality services.	2010 – 2013
	Refrain from placing CSEC victims in facilities designed for youth on probation.	2011 – 2013

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