In 2020, Fiji made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government approved its first National Action Plan and National Strategy for Combating Human Trafficking, which contains provisions to address child labor, including its worst forms, and child trafficking in Fiji. Also during the reporting period, the Inter-Agency National Human Trafficking Committee met for the first time since 2011. However, children in Fiji are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture. Fiji's light work provisions are not specific enough to prevent



children from being involved in child labor. In addition, social programs undertaken by the government are insufficient to support children vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation, human trafficking, and involuntary domestic work.

#### I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Fiji are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture. (1-4) Table I provides key indicators on children's work and education in Fiji. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table I. 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 (%)		108.9

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2019, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2021. (5) Data were unavailable from International Labor Organization's analysis, 2021. (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	Cutting,† loading,† weeding, and spraying chemicals† on sugarcane (1,7)
	Planting, picking, and using chemicals† on tobacco (I)
	Collecting and splitting coconuts; harvesting rice; planting, harvesting, weeding, and spraying fertilizers on roots (including dalo and yaqona); and planting and harvesting other kinds of fruits and vegetables† (1)
	Pig farming and goat and cattle herding (I)
	Fishing† and deep-sea diving† (1,7)
Services	Street work, including pushing wheelbarrows for shoppers in markets, vending, washing cars, shining shoes, begging, and selling fruit and other foods (1,7-10)
	Domestic work (1,7)
	Working in garages, in retail shops, or roadside stalls (7)
	Collecting bottles† and scrap metal† (1,7)
Categorical Worst Forms of	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1,4,7,10-16)
Child Labor‡	Use in the production of pornography (7,14,15)
	Forced labor in agriculture, begging, and domestic work, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking (4)
	Use in illicit activities, including drug trafficking (17,18)

<sup>†</sup> Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

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

# Fiji

#### MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

Children are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation in Fiji, particularly by family members, taxi drivers, foreign tourists, businesspersons, and crew on foreign fishing vessels. (1,4,7,10-12,15,16,19) The NGO Pacific Dialogue and the ILO stated that they have received reports of children subjected to organized prostitution, including being advertised online. (20) In addition, research shows that children in Fiji are subjected to online commercial sexual exploitation, including child pornography. (14-16) Parents sometimes send their children to live with families in cities or near schools to facilitate their continuing education and to perform light household work. Research found that some of these children are vulnerable to involuntary domestic work or are forced to engage in sexual activity in exchange for food, clothing, or shelter. (4,10,21) Street children in Fiji are vulnerable to multiple forms of labor and sexual exploitation, such as commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking. (7,10,16,22) In addition, there were some media reports of children involved in selling drugs in Fiji. (17,18)

During the reporting period, Tropical Cyclone Yasa hit Vanua Levu, one of Fiji's main islands, causing destruction of homes, schools, and buildings, and leaving thousands of children vulnerable. (7) The Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts, with support from UNICEF, is in the process of identifying damages to school buildings as part of the government's disaster response. (23) In addition to natural disasters, the COVID-19 pandemic profoundly impacted students' access to education in Fiji. Nationwide school closures affected low-income families, single parent families, and children with special education needs. (7) Overall, natural disasters and the pandemic increased children's vulnerabilities to the worst forms of child labor and human trafficking in Fiji. (10)

## II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Fiji has ratified most key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention		Ratification
KETTOEN	ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
A TOPY	ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
	UN CRC	<b>√</b>
	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	1

During the reporting period, the Fijian Parliament approved reports on the review of the UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict and the UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography. Recommendations for ratification will be implemented through a legislative amendment. (7,24,25)

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Fiji's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including identification of light work activities permissible for children.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Article 92 of the Employment Relations Promulgation (26)
Minimum Age for Hazardous	Yes	18	Article 40 of the Employment Relations (Administration) Regulations; Hazardous
Work			Occupations Prohibited to Children Under 18 Years of Age Order (27,28)

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

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Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Hazardous Occupations Prohibited to Children Under 18 Years of Age Order (28)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 6 and 91 of the Employment Relations Promulgation; Articles 20–21 of the Immigration Act; Articles 102–103 and 111–121 of the Crimes Decree (26,29,30)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 91 of the Employment Relations Promulgation; Article 20 of the Immigration Act; Articles 111–121 of the Crimes Decree (26,29,30)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 91 of the Employment Relations Promulgation; Articles 225–227 of the Crimes Decree; Article 62A of the Juveniles (Amendment) Act (26,30,31)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 91 of the Employment Relations Promulgation; Article 58 of the Juveniles Act (26,32)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 7 of the Royal Fiji Military Forces Act (33)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes*		Article 7 of the Royal Fiji Military Forces Act (33)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Compulsory Education Order; Compulsory Education Regulations (34)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 31 of the Constitution of Fiji (35)

<sup>\*</sup> No conscription (33)

The Employment Relations Promulgation specifies the conditions under which children ages 13 to 15 may engage in light work, but does not include a list of activities that are permissible. (26,36)

## 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 operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Employment, Productivity, and Industrial Relations (MEPIR)	Lead agency responsible for enforcing laws related to child labor. Investigates places of employment and child labor law violations. (7) Maintains a 24 hour phone line to accept reports of child labor and refers children to social services when appropriate. (2,7) With the establishment of a Labor Inspection System on Child Labor, over 200 child labor cases have been investigated since 2011. (37,38)
Employment Relations Tribunal	Adjudicates alleged violations of child labor provisions in the Employment Relations Promulgation. (7)
Fiji Police Force	Investigates criminal violations regarding child labor, child trafficking, and commercial sexual exploitation. Enforces laws on child trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and illicit activities. (7) Maintains a Human Trafficking Unit and provides training to other police units focused on combating human trafficking. (19) Collaborates with the Australian Federal Police to combat potential child sex tourism by Australian nationals, who comprise the largest tourist group visiting Fiji. (39)
Department of Immigration	Responsible for immigration services, refugee services, and efforts to combat human trafficking. Administers and enforces Immigration, Passport, and Citizenship Acts. (7) Coordinates with the Fiji Police Force to investigate cases involving underage victims of commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking, which are then tried in the criminal court system. (7)
Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions	Enforces laws on child trafficking. (40)

#### **Labor Law Enforcement**

In 2020, labor law enforcement agencies in Fiji took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Employment, Productivity, and Industrial Relations (MEPIR) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including that inspectors must first seek the business owners' permission before conducting inspections in the informal sector.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2019	2020
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$3.9 million (20)	Unknown (7)
Number of Labor Inspectors	73 (20)	45 (7)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Yes (20)	Yes (26)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Yes (20)	No (7)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A (20)	N/A
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (20)	Yes (7)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	3,562 (20)	843 (7)
Number Conducted at Worksite	3,562 (20)	843 (7)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	41 (20)	0 (7)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	0 (20)	0 (7)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A (20)	0 (7)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (20)	Yes (7)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (20)	No (7)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (20)	Yes (26)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (20)	Yes (10)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (20)	Yes (7)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (20)	Yes (7)

The Child Labor Unit within MEPIR was disbanded, and now all labor inspectors are expected to look for child labor violations during inspections. (20) During the reporting period, the government employed 45 labor inspectors, down from 73 in 2019. However, government officials confirmed that the number of inspectors was sufficient to enforce labor laws in Fiji. (7) Inspections are conducted in the workers' language, including English, indigenous Fijian (iTaukei), and Hindi. (2) The Department of Labor conducted 843 inspections during the reporting period and confirmed that no major child labor violations were detected. However, it was reported that the department resolved minor complaints received about children selling food on the street through briefings with parents about child labor laws, rather than imposing penalties. (7)

Although information on the budget allocation to the Department of Labor for the 2020/2021 fiscal year is available, there is no breakdown information available for the allocation to the labor inspectorate. (7)

During the reporting period, MEPIR announced that 231 children engaged in child labor had been withdrawn and returned to school or admitted to technical training programs. (41)

#### **Criminal Law Enforcement**

In 2020, criminal law enforcement agencies in Fiji took actions to combat child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including training for criminal investigators.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2019	2020
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Yes (20)	Unknown (7)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A (20)	N/A
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (20)	Unknown (7)

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor (Cont.)

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2019	2020
Number of Investigations	2 (20)	Unknown (7)
Number of Violations Found	2 (20)	Unknown (7)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	I (20)	0 (7)
Number of Convictions	I (20)	0 (7)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (20)	No (7)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (20)	Yes (7)

In Fiji, criminal authority agencies, including the Fiji Police Force, can refer children found in cases of the worst forms of child labor on a case-by-case basis to the Department of Social Welfare. (7)

## IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
Inter-Agency Network	Focuses on child labor issues at the district and provincial level. Monitors and reports cases of non-compliance. (42) Chaired by the Ministry of Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations. (43) Comprises inter-agency committees in nine towns in Fiji. (42) This coordinating body was active during the reporting period. (7)
National Coordinating Committee on Children	Coordinates child labor and child safety enforcement efforts. Comprising the Fiji Police Force, the Public Prosecutor's Office, the Solicitor General's Office, the Department of Social Welfare, MEPIR, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, and NGOs that work on child labor issues. (7) This coordinating body was active during the reporting period. (7)
Inter-Agency Committee on Child Abuse	Investigates child labor cases, refers children to school, and monitors cases when a referral is made to the Department of Social Welfare. (2,3,44) Shares information on child labor cases, including the worst forms of child labor. (7) This coordinating body was active during the reporting period. (7)
Inter-Agency Taskforce on Beggars	Addresses issues concerning children who beg and other exploited children. Ministry of Social Welfare, Women, and Poverty Alleviation and police regularly conduct patrols to identify and assist children. (43) This coordinating body was active during the reporting period. (7)
Inter-Agency Working Group on Human Trafficking	Oversees the human trafficking case management system by providing guidance on referral procedures when a potential human trafficking case, including child trafficking, is identified. (46,47) Led by the Ministry of Defense, National Security, and Policing and the Office of the Prime Minister, comprising technical working groups with senior government officials and assisted by international partners and civil society organizations. (48)

## 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 implementation.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
United Nations Pacific Strategy (2018–2022)	A multinational strategic framework, comprising 14 South Pacific nations, created to address, develop, and implement strategic economic development priorities in the South Pacific, including eliminating child labor and the worst forms of child labor. (49) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the United Nations Pacific Strategy (2018–2022) during the reporting period.
National Action Plan and National Strategy for Combatting Human Trafficking†	Establishes oversight of anti-trafficking in persons operations and enhances the capabilities of law enforcement, including police, immigration, border security, and other regulatory bodies, to address the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation and the use of children in the production of pornography, as a result of human trafficking. (7,46,50,51)
Free Education Grant	Provides 12 years of tuition-free education for children with Fijian citizenship in 904 eligible primary and secondary schools. Also provides bus passes to students, and boats and outboard motors for island communities with staff and students commuting to school. (20) During the reporting period, the Ministry of Education (MOE) funded \$93,000 for the provision of boats and outboard motor engines to support students' transportation accessibility to schools, particularly for students in Fiji's maritime islands and rural areas. (7)

<sup>†</sup> Policy was approved during the reporting period.



Fiji is a Pathfinder country under Alliance 8.7, which involves a commitment to accelerate action toward achieving Sustainable Development Goal Target 8.7, which calls for the eradication of child labor by 2025, and forced labor, modern slavery, and human trafficking by 2030. (53)

### VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2020, 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 addressing the needs of victims of commercial sexual exploitation, human trafficking, and involuntary domestic work from being sent to live with other families.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
UNICEF Pacific Multi- Country Child Protection Program (2018–2022)	Multi-country program in 14 Pacific Island countries. Prioritizes children's rights including the elimination of the worst forms of child labor. Aligned with the UN Pacific Strategy 2018–2022. (54) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the UNICEF Pacific Multi-Country Child Protection Program (2018–2022) during the reporting period.
Education Assistance Programs†	MOE Food Voucher and Bus Fare Assistance program provides \$24 in food vouchers and subsidized bus fares to families with combined annual income of less than \$7,382 to offset the cost of education for children attending remote schools. (44,55) MOE Tuition Fee Free Grant program provides subsidized tuition fee free grants for early childhood education centers or students attending preschool. (56) Both programs were active during the reporting period. (7)
Child Protection Program and Allowance†	Ministry of Women, Children, and Poverty Alleviation (MWCPA) Child Protection Program raises awareness of, and enacts recommendations from, the UN CRC. (20) In 2020, the government allocated \$6 million in funding for child protection allowance for approximately 8,366 households in Fiji, and increase from \$230,000 in 2019. (7) MWCPA Child Protection Allowance assists single mothers, widows, and children. (45)
Trafficking Victims Rehabilitation Programs†	Safety Net Project funds rehabilitation services for females who are under age 18 and victims of commercial sexual exploitation. Receives referrals from various entities, including the Fiji Police. (43) This program was active during the reporting period. (43) Homes of Hope is an NGO program that assists victims of sexual abuse and human trafficking. (20,45)
Measurement, Awareness- Raising, and Policy Engagement Project on Child Labor and Forced Labor (MAP16)	\$105,000 USDOL-funded global project implemented by the ILO, which aims to strengthen policies and improve the capacity of governments and other stakeholders to combat child labor, forced labor, and human trafficking through national, regional, and global initiatives. (57) For additional information, please see our website.

<sup>†</sup> Program is funded by the Government of Fiji.

During the reporting period, the government increased its budgetary allocation to the Ministry of Women, Children, and Poverty Alleviation (MWCPA) and their child services programs. These allocations include \$147,000 in grants for NGOs caring for children under the care of MWCPA's Department of Social Welfare and \$98,000 for the national child helpline. (7)

Although Fiji has a program that targets child labor, the scope of this program is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, including children who may be sent to live with other families and subjected to commercial sexual exploitation, human trafficking, and involuntary domestic work. (4,20) While NGOs provide limited support services, these are concentrated in the capital city of Suva. (58)

### 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 Fiji (Table 11).

<sup>‡</sup> The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (7)

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Accede to the UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict.	2013 – 2020
	Accede to the UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.	2013 – 2020
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2020
	Ensure that the law's light work provisions are specific enough to prevent children from involvement in child labor.	2015 – 2020
Enforcement	Publish information on the labor inspectorate's funding.	2020
	Strengthen the labor inspectorate by initiating targeted inspections based on analysis of data related to risk-prone sectors and patterns of serious incidents.	2020
	Publish criminal law enforcement information, including initial training for new criminal investigators, refresher courses, the number of investigations conducted, and the number of violations found for crimes relating to child labor, including its worst forms.	2020
Government Policies	Publish activities undertaken to implement the United Nations Pacific Strategy (2018–2022) during the reporting period.	2020
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs.	2017 – 2020
	Publish activities undertaken to implement the UNICEF Pacific Multi-Country Child Protection Program (2018–2022) during the reporting period.	2020
	Increase the availability of support services for children vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation, human trafficking, and involuntary domestic work from living with other families.	2010 – 2020

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