

In 2020, Morocco made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Kingdom of Morocco claims the territory of Western Sahara and administers the area that it controls by the same constitution, laws, and structures as in internationally recognized Morocco, including laws that deal with child labor. In 2020, the government enacted programs to pilot a child protection network and assess the feasibility of 10 additional child welfare centers. In addition, the Ministry of Labor launched a new roadmap for fighting child labor that seeks to: improve Domestic Work Law 19.12 and make benefits available from the National Social Security Fund to child domestic workers; improve labor inspections at the 54 designated centers across the country by hiring specialists to enhance the oversight of inspections and the methodology behind interventions; strengthen partnerships with civil society organizations; and increase international cooperation on child labor. Morocco also became a Pathfinder country under Alliance 8.7 in 2020, which calls for the eradication of child labor by 2025, and forced labor, modern slavery, and human trafficking by 2030. However, children in Western Sahara are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in forced domestic work and in commercial sexual exploitation. Children also engage in child labor in producing artisanal handicrafts. Laws related to the minimum age for work and the use of children for illicit activities do not meet international standards. In addition, research could not determine whether penalties were imposed for violations related to the worst forms of child labor. Furthermore, the scope of government programs that target child labor is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem.




I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Although research is limited, there is evidence that children in Western Sahara are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in forced domestic work and in commercial sexual exploitation. Commercial sexual exploitation of migrant girls occurs and is reportedly more prevalent in fishing villages and on fishing boats. (1,2) Children, particularly in rural areas, are vulnerable to child labor due to educational barriers similar to those faced in other locations in Morocco, such as insufficient facilities, lack of reliable and safe transportation, and unqualified teachers. (1,2) Research has not been conducted to determine the prevalence of child labor in Western Sahara, nor has research found the levels of education among children who are engaged in child labor in Western Sahara.

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

The Moroccan-controlled portion of the territory of Western Sahara is subject to the same laws as internationally recognized Morocco. (2,3) The Popular Front for the Liberation of the Saguia el-Hamra and Río de Oro (Polisario Front), an organization that seeks the territory's independence, controls the remaining territory; information on the laws applicable in the remaining portion of the territory is unavailable. (1,2,4-6) Morocco has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor, which the Government of Morocco extends to the areas in Western Sahara that it controls (Table I).

Table I. 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	✓

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The Government of Morocco has established laws and regulations related to child labor that extend to Western Sahara (Table 2). However, gaps exist in Morocco's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the prohibition of using children in illicit activities.

Table 2. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	15	Article 143 of the Labor Code (7)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 147 and 181 of the Labor Code (7)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Hazardous Child Labor List, Decree No. 2-10-183; Article 181 of the Labor Code (7,8)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	No		Article 10 and 12 of the Labor Code; Article 467-2 of the Penal Code (7,10)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 448.1, and 448.4-448.5 of the Law on Trafficking in Human Beings (9)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Article 503-2 of the Penal Code (10)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	19	Article 4 of Royal Decree of 9 June 1966 (11)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 4 of Law No. 44-18 (12)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Articles 448.1 and 448.4 of the Law on Trafficking in Human Beings (9)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Article 1 of Law No. 04-00 (13)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 1 of Law No. 04-00 (13)

The labor law does not apply to children who work in the traditional artisan or handicraft sectors for family businesses with fewer than five employees. (7)

The Penal Code only criminalizes the forced labor of children under 15 years old. (25) Moroccan law does not prohibit the use, procuring, or offering of children for the production or trafficking of drugs. (26,31,34)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The Government of Morocco has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 3). Information about labor law and criminal law enforcement in Western Sahara is unavailable. The government does not publicly release information on its labor law enforcement efforts in Western Sahara.

Table 3. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Labor and Vocational Integration (MOLVI)	Enforces child labor laws with its 54 inspection offices throughout the country. (21) During the reporting period, MOLVI launched a new roadmap for fighting child labor that seeks to: improve Domestic Work Law 19.12 and make benefits available from the National Social Security Fund to child domestic workers; improve labor inspections at the 54 designated centers across the country by hiring specialists to enhance the oversight of inspections and the methodology behind interventions; strengthen partnerships with civil society organizations; and increase international cooperation on child labor. (21)
Ministry of the Interior	Enforces prohibitions on trafficking in persons, prostitution, and other exploitative crimes involving minors, as established in the Penal Code, through the General Directorate of National Security. (2,14,21,22)
General Prosecutor	Prosecutes criminal offenses against children and processes cases involving women and children in the court system. (1,14,21,22) The General Prosecutor is a judiciary body that serves independently from the Ministry of Justice. (21)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The Government of Morocco has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 4).

Table 4. Key Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
Technical Committee Under the Special Ministerial Commission for Children for the Protection and Improvement of Childhood	Ensures inter-sectoral coordination and monitoring for implementing international conventions on children's issues through a committee of 25 government bodies, chaired by the Head of the Government of Morocco. Establishes strategies and mechanisms to implement national policies and plans for child protection and coordinates the management of efforts at the local and regional levels. (20,21) Met regularly in 2020. (21)
The Inter-Ministerial Commission for Combating Trafficking in Persons	Coordinates the government's approach to trafficking in persons on an inter-ministerial level. Conducts training sessions for members of the security services. (26) Chaired by the Head of the Government and lead by the Ministry of Justice, with representation from civil society. (21) Established in May 2019. (21,26,27)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies that are consistent with relevant international standards on child labor (Table 5).

Table 5. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
Ministry of Solidarity, Social Development, Equality and the Family Integrated Public Policy on the Protection of Children in Morocco	Promotes an interdisciplinary approach to respond to the exploitation of children and other issues. (14,28) In 2020, the government enacted programs to pilot a child protection network and assess the feasibility of 10 additional child welfare centers. (21)

In 2020, Morocco became a Pathfinder country under Alliance 8.7, which calls for the eradication of child labor by 2025, and forced labor, modern slavery, and human trafficking by 2030. (21)

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 6). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the adequacy of efforts to address the problem in all sectors.

Table 6. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Tayssir Conditional Cash Transfer Program†	Ministry of Solidary, Social Development, Equality and the Family program that provides direct cash transfers to qualifying families whose children meet school attendance criteria, aiming to increase school enrollment and reduce dropout rates, particularly in rural areas. (4,21) In 2020, over two million students from low-income families were participants in the Tayssir program. In addition, in 2020, 13,221 children with disabilities received education assistance. (21)

† Program is funded by the Government of Morocco.

‡ The Government of Morocco had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (21,23,29)

In 2020, the government continued a regularization campaign to provide legal status and documentation to foreign migrants who are vulnerable to exploitation for child labor. (22,32,33) Although the government has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, including for children subjected to forced domestic work. (1,3,34)

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 Western Sahara (Table 7).

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Table 7. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that all children age 15 and under are protected by law, including children who work for artisan and handicraft businesses that regularly employ hired workers or produce goods for non-local consumption.	2009 – 2020
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the use, procuring, and offering of a child for prostitution.	2019 – 2020
	Criminalize the use, procuring, and offering of children for the production and trafficking of drugs.	2015 – 2020
	Ensure that forced labor of children over age 15 is criminalized.	2019 – 2020
Social Programs	Remove barriers to education, such as insufficient facilities, lack of reliable and safe transportation, and unqualified teachers, particularly in rural areas.	2015 – 2020
	Expand existing programs to address the scope of the child labor problem, including child victims of commercial sexual exploitation.	2017 – 2019
	Conduct a comprehensive study of children's work activities to inform policies and practices to determine whether children are engaged in or at risk of becoming involved in child labor, and determine the number of child laborers and their education levels.	2013 – 2019

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