

In 2021, Afghanistan made no advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. Officials in Afghanistan arrested, detained, and prosecuted children for terrorism-related crimes during the reporting period, including some younger than age 12 who had been forcibly recruited by non-state armed groups. Furthermore, authorities considered some child trafficking victims, especially those engaged in bacha bazi or armed conflict, as criminals, housing them in juvenile detention centers and subjecting them to torture and other forms of ill treatment rather than referring them to victim support services. Children in Afghanistan are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in armed conflict, forced labor in the production of bricks and carpets, and commercial sexual exploitation. Afghanistan lacks a mechanism to impose penalties for child labor violations and lacks sufficient programs to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. In addition, Afghan law does not sufficiently criminalize forced labor, debt bondage, or the commercial sexual exploitation of girls.



## I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Afghanistan are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in armed conflict, forced labor in the production of bricks and carpets, and in commercial sexual exploitation. (1,2) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Afghanistan.

**Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education**

| Children                      | Age     | Percent          |
|-------------------------------|---------|------------------|
| Working (% and population)    | 5 to 14 | 12.0 (1,206,134) |
| Attending School (%)          | 5 to 14 | 36.4             |
| Combining Work and School (%) | 7 to 14 | 6.5              |
| Primary Completion Rate (%)   |         | 84.3             |

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2019, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2022. (3)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Income, Expenditure and Labour Force Survey (IE&L), 2019–2020. (4)

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     | Farming, including harvesting poppies (5-11)   |
|                 | Herding (5,7,9-11)   |
| Industry        | Carpet weaving† (5,7,11-13)  |
|                 | Construction, including gravelling, paving, and painting (5,7,10-12,14,15)                             |
|                 | Coal, gold, and salt mining† (11,16-18)  |
|                 | Brickmaking (5,10-12,19-21)  |
|                 | Working in metal workshops, including in the production of doors, windows, and water tanks (10,11,22)  |
| Services        | Working as tinsmiths and welders† (10,12,13)   |
|                 | Domestic work (9,13,23,24)   |
|                 | Transporting water and goods, including across international borders (7)                               |
|                 | Street work, including peddling, vending, shoe shining, carrying goods, and begging (7,10,11,13,25,26) |
|                 | Collecting garbage† (10,11,13,14,25)   |

# Afghanistan

## NO ADVANCEMENT

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

| Sector/Industry                         | Activity   |
|---|--|
| Services                                | Washing cars (7,10-12)   |
|   | Selling goods in stores (10-12)  |
|   | Collecting and selling firewood (7,10,27)  |
|   | Repairing automobiles (10,14)  |
|   | Tailoring in garment workshops (10,21)   |
|   | Pushing loads on a wheelbarrow ( <i>krachiwani</i> ) (10,12)   |
|   | Working as waiters in restaurants (10-12,28)   |
| Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor† | Forced domestic work (11,23,29)  |
|   | Commercial sexual exploitation (10,11,29-31)   |
|   | Forced labor in begging and the production of bricks and carpets, and for use as assistant truck drivers (1,2,13,22,28,29,32)                          |
|   | Forced recruitment of children by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict, including for terrorist activities and suicide bombings (11,33-35) |
|   | Recruitment of children by state armed groups for use in armed conflict. (33,34)   |
|   | Use in illicit activities, including in the production and trafficking of drugs, and pickpocketing (2,5,10,11,22,25,28,29,36-39)                       |
|   | Weapons trafficking (11)   |

† 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.

In August 2021, the Taliban took control of Kabul and declared the establishment of an “Islamic Emirate” throughout the country. The U.S. government does not recognize the Taliban as the government of Afghanistan, and their non-recognized status has precluded normal communications between the U.S. government and Afghan officials on the matter of child labor. (11,40) The closure of the U.S. Embassy in Kabul and absence of a diplomatic presence in Kabul since August further hampered access to information regarding the prevalence and type of child labor that continued in the country. (41)

Since the group’s takeover, Taliban representatives have indicated the group’s readiness to take steps to reduce child labor and trafficking, including through international coordination. (41) Nonetheless, reporting showed that the subsequent humanitarian crisis, which resulted in food insecurity, displacement, and deteriorating economic conditions, resulted in an increase in the prevalence of the worst forms of child labor. (11,42,43) In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic and drought conditions further exacerbated child labor in the country. (11,42,44)

Children in Afghanistan are recruited and used as child soldiers. (45,46) During the reporting period, at least 58 boys were recruited as child soldiers by the Taliban, government entities under the Ghani administration, such as the Afghan National Police (ANP), or pro-government militias. (46) Moreover, in 2021, the Haqqani Network, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar’s Hizb-I Islami, and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Khorasan Province were all found to have recruited child soldiers in Afghanistan. (47) Low rates of birth registration and the falsification of identity documents contributed to the prevalence of child soldiers by making it difficult to determine a recruit’s age. (48,49) Observers reported that some officials accepted bribes to produce false identity documents that indicated that the recipient boys were older than age 18. (29,48) Even newly introduced biometrics efforts have not enabled Child Protection Units (CPUs) to entirely restrict children from enlisting in the police force. (48) Despite recruitment occurring within official government entities, Afghanistan has never prosecuted military or police officials for facilitating the recruitment or use of child soldiers. (45)

Afghanistan is a source and destination country for child trafficking. (10,12,14,25) Worsening economic and humanitarian conditions in Afghanistan following the Taliban’s August takeover increased children’s vulnerability to child marriage and trafficking, making them more susceptible to the worst forms of child labor. (41)

Boys in Afghanistan continue to be subjected to commercial sexual exploitation through the practice of *bacha bazi*, which typically entails keeping a male or transgender child for the purpose of sexual gratification. (11)

Although *bacha bazi* is prohibited by the Trafficking in Persons Law, the Penal Code, and the Ministry of Defense Protection of Children in Armed Conflict Policy, a significant challenge remains in ensuring accountability. (11,50) Perpetrators of this crime included police commanders, military members, tribal leaders, warlords, members of organized crime groups, clergy, and other men, typically with some authority or financial influence, who conspire to make boys available for sex. (51,52) Research found that, prior to the Taliban takeover, Afghan service members were among the most frequent perpetrators of *bacha bazi*. (11) In some cases, boys were also forced to serve tea or dance at parties. (53,54) The practice is pervasive in the country, and orphans, runaways, school dropouts, and other marginalized youth are particularly at risk. (29,55) Some boys were sold into the practice by their families or abducted from the street, including by police officers, prior to August 15, 2021. (30,56) Prior to the Taliban takeover, members of the ANP, the Afghan Local Police, the Afghan National Army (ANA), the Afghan Border Police, and checkpoint commanders exploited boys for *bacha bazi*. (40,45) Children subjected to *bacha bazi* often become further victimized by the threat of violence when returning to their families, necessitating the placement of these child victims in rehabilitation centers. (11) The suspension of international aid after August 2021 significantly impacted *bacha bazi* victims' access to rehabilitation services. (42,57,58) According to media and NGO reports, many of these cases went unreported or were referred to traditional mediation, which often allowed perpetrators to re-offend. Cases were further under-reported because the stigma associated with these crimes prevented the vast majority of child victims from bringing cases forward to law enforcement or seeking care, especially when the alleged perpetrators were members of the police force. (59) Afghanistan has prosecuted a limited number of government officers for *bacha bazi*, including two ANA officers and seven Afghan National Police in 2021. (41)

Girls from impoverished families are often forced into marriage with adult men in order for the girls' families to obtain dowries. These girls are often subsequently forced into carpet weaving and required to provide their earnings to their husbands. (11,42,60,61) Girls are also sold to men in India, Iran, and Pakistan and subsequently exploited sexually or in domestic servitude. (45) Meanwhile, girls from China, Iran, and Pakistan are sometimes trafficked to Afghanistan for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation. (62)

Most human trafficking victims in Afghanistan are children, some of whom are forced into brick production or the production of illegal drugs to settle family debts. (11,29,35) Boys, especially those traveling unaccompanied, were particularly vulnerable to human trafficking, including for work in agriculture and construction. (63,64) Children's families may pay intermediaries to send children for labor abroad, where they are subjected to labor and sex trafficking in Iran, Pakistan, and parts of Europe. (45)

Adults may use their infant children in street begging, while other children migrate unaccompanied to engage in child labor. (11,64,65) Of all the sectors in which Afghan children work, carpet weaving is the sector with the largest number of child laborers, particularly girls between the ages of 11 and 15. (11,66) Many of these children suffer respiratory ailments. (67)

During the reporting period, nearly half of Afghanistan's children did not attend school due to poverty and the effects of conflict; as many as 1.9 million children either engaged in or were subjected to work. (11) Moreover, after August 2021, school-age girls were not allowed to attend classes beyond the sixth grade in most provinces, although universities continued to accept women. (11,41,68) In some cases, Shia Hazara girls faced deliberate militant attacks against their community and girls' schools, limiting their access to education. (69,70) Additional barriers to education for children included displacement of populations due to conflict, the use of schools as military bases, living long distances from schools, school-related fees, lack of security, lack of female teachers in girls' schools, and lack of identity documentation. (2,15,71,72)




## II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Afghanistan has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

# Afghanistan

## NO ADVANCEMENT

**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 | ✓            |

Afghanistan has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Afghanistan's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including lack of criminal prohibitions against the commercial sexual exploitation of children.

**Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor**

| Standard  | Meets International Standards | Age | Legislation   |
|---|-------------------------------|-----|---|
| Minimum Age for Work  | No                            | 18  | Article 13 of the Labor Law (73)  |
| Minimum Age for Hazardous Work  | Yes                           | 18  | Articles 13 and 120 of the Labor Law; Article 613 of the Penal Code; Article 63 of the Law on Protection of Child Rights (73-75)              |
| Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children | Yes                           |     | List of Prohibited Jobs for Child Laborers; Article 613 of the Penal Code (74,76)   |
| Prohibition of Forced Labor   | No                            |     | Article 4 of the Labor Law; Articles 510-512 of the Penal Code; Article 37 of the Law on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (73,74,77) |
| Prohibition of Child Trafficking  | Yes                           |     | Articles 510–512 of the Penal Code (74)   |
| Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children                     | No                            |     | Article 18.2 of the Law on Elimination of Violence Against Women; Articles 510–512, 650, and 652–667 of the Penal Code (74,77)                |
| Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities                           | Yes                           |     | List of Prohibited Jobs for Child Laborers; Articles 1, 7, and 23 of the Counter Narcotics Law (76,78)  |
| Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment                          | Yes                           | 18  | Article 605–608 of the Penal Code (74)  |
| Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military         | N/A*                          |     |   |
| Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups                 | Yes                           |     | Articles 510–512 of the Penal Code (74)   |
| Compulsory Education Age  | Yes                           | 15‡ | Article 17 of the Education Law; Article 609 of the Penal Code (74,79)  |
| Free Public Education   | Yes                           |     | Article 17 of the Education Law (79)  |

\* Country has no conscription (80)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (81)

The Taliban have not made a clear pronouncement on whether the group would follow modified versions of either Afghanistan's 1964 or 2004 constitution until it produced a new constitution, making it unclear the degree to which prior elements of the legal system remained in effect. Simultaneously, the Taliban have conveyed that prior laws remain in effect unless they violate the Taliban interpretation of *sharia*, as determined by Taliban courts. (40)

The Afghan Labor Law's minimum age provision prohibits those who have not completed age 18 from being "recruited as a worker." (73) However, the law defines "worker" as a person who is "recruited based on a definite contract," meaning that the minimum age provision does not apply to those in informal employment.

Afghan law does not sufficiently criminalize practices similar to slavery, including debt bondage. (73, 74)

The Penal Code explicitly prohibits and sets penalties for the use of male or transgender children for *bacha bazi* and prohibits the use of girls for prostitution and pornographic performances. However, the legal framework does not adequately criminalize the use of children for the production of pornography. (74,75,77)

### III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

Afghanistan 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   |
|--|--|
| Child Protection Action Network (CPAN)       | Operates as a coalition of agencies, NGOs, and community and religious leaders. Receives complaints of child labor; investigates such cases, refers them to NGO and government shelters that provide social services, and coordinates and provides case management. (2,82) Not all provinces have a CPAN chapter. The capacity of CPAN chapters is not uniform or based on need, and the type of intervention depends on members of a particular CPAN chapter and resources available. (28) Research was unable to determine whether the networks remained active during the reporting period. |
| Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA) | Responds to complaints of child labor, child trafficking, and child sexual exploitation; refers cases to the Attorney General's Office (AGO) and NGO shelters; and operates a shelter for trafficking victims in Kabul. (28) Research was unable to determine whether the Kabul shelter remained in operation.   |
| Ministry of Interior                         | Enforces laws related to child trafficking, the use of children in illicit activities, and child sexual exploitation. (28)   |
| National Directorate of Security             | Identifies human trafficking victims and refers these cases to the Ministry of Interior. (28)  |
| Attorney General's Office (AGO)              | Investigates and prosecutes human trafficking, abduction, and sexual exploitation cases. (28)  |

Child Protection Action Network (CPAN) units across the country respond to complaints of child labor, investigate cases, and issue warnings or refer criminal cases to the Attorney General's Office (AGO). However, a person wishing to file a complaint must specify in writing the precise legal statute for the labor violations, making it cumbersome for some citizens to do so. (82) Research also indicates that limited training and resources hinder prompt government response to complaints about child labor. (2)

#### **Labor Law Enforcement**

In 2021, research did not find information on whether labor law enforcement agencies in Afghanistan took actions to address child labor. (11)

**Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor**

| Overview of Labor Law Enforcement                                 | 2020        | 2021         |
|---|-------------|--------------|
| Labor Inspectorate Funding  | Unknown (2) | Unknown (11) |
| Number of Labor Inspectors  | Unknown     | Unknown (11) |
| Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties                               | No (83)     | No (83)      |
| Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors                         | No (2)      | No (11)      |
| Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor                       | Unknown (2) | Unknown (11) |
| Refresher Courses Provided  | Unknown (2) | Unknown (11) |
| Number of Labor Inspections Conducted                             | Unknown (2) | Unknown (11) |
| Number Conducted at Worksite                                      | Unknown (2) | Unknown (11) |
| Number of Child Labor Violations Found                            | Unknown (2) | Unknown (11) |
| Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed | Unknown (2) | Unknown (11) |
| Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected       | Unknown (2) | Unknown (11) |
| Routine Inspections Conducted                                     | Unknown (2) | Unknown (11) |
| Routine Inspections Targeted                                      | Unknown (2) | Unknown (11) |

# Afghanistan

## NO ADVANCEMENT

**Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor (Cont.)**

| Overview of Labor Law Enforcement  | 2020        | 2021         |
|--|-------------|--------------|
| Unannounced Inspections Permitted  | No (83)     | No (83)      |
| Unannounced Inspections Conducted  | Unknown (2) | Unknown (11) |
| Complaint Mechanism Exists   | Yes (2)     | Unknown (11) |
| Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services | No (2)      | No (11)      |

In 2021, information about the number of labor inspectors was unavailable; however, as of December 2018, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA) had 27 inspector positions, 21 of which were filled. (2,5,28) The number of labor inspectors is likely insufficient for the size of Afghanistan's workforce, which includes more than 7.9 million workers. According to the ILO's technical advice of a ratio approaching 1 inspector for every 40,000 workers in less developed economies, Afghanistan would need to employ roughly 200 labor inspectors. (84) Government officials, NGOs, and UNICEF have previously acknowledged that the number of labor inspectors is insufficient. (2) The international community did not supply additional support to labor inspectors after August. (41) Moreover, sources indicate that labor inspections took place only in the capital, Kabul, prior to the Taliban takeover. It is unclear whether inspections continued after the Taliban takeover in August of 2021. (2,41) Although Afghanistan's labor code designates the MoLSA as the entity with labor law enforcement authority, the Ministry lacks implementing regulations and labor law enforcement funding, leaving inspectors with no mechanism to assess penalties and limited ability to carry out inspections. (70)

### Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2021, research did not find information on whether criminal law enforcement agencies in Afghanistan took actions to address child labor.

**Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor**

| Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement  | 2020        | 2021         |
|---|-------------|--------------|
| Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators                                       | Unknown (2) | Unknown (11) |
| Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor                        | Unknown (2) | Unknown (11) |
| Refresher Courses Provided  | Unknown (2) | Unknown (11) |
| Number of Investigations  | Unknown (2) | Unknown (11) |
| Number of Violations Found  | Unknown (2) | Unknown (11) |
| Number of Prosecutions Initiated  | Unknown (2) | Unknown (11) |
| Number of Convictions   | Unknown (2) | Unknown (11) |
| Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor            | Unknown (2) | Unknown (11) |
| Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services | No (2)      | No (11)      |

As in years past, it is likely that children used as child soldiers by the Taliban, ISIS-K, and other groups were imprisoned under the Ghani administration without consideration for their age, with no official reintegration program for these child victims. (11)

Child victims of human trafficking are routinely prosecuted and convicted of unlawful acts that traffickers compelled them to commit—and this practice is likely to have continued during the reporting period. (29,85,86) Male victims of child trafficking, especially those engaged in *bacha bazi* or armed conflict, were sometimes referred to juvenile detention or rehabilitation facilities on criminal charges, instead of being referred to appropriate victim support services. (2,29,34,87) Under the Ghani administration, the government arrested, detained, and prosecuted for terrorism-related crimes children younger than age 12 who had been forcibly recruited by non-state armed groups. Furthermore, authorities housed some child trafficking victims in juvenile detention centers, sometimes for several years. (72) Such children are considered criminals even after being transferred to rehabilitation centers. (29,56) The UN reported that some of these children were subjected to torture and ill treatment. (87,88)

Although information was unavailable for 2021, former government officials previously stated that they lacked equipment and transportation to carry out investigations. (89) In addition, security agencies and the Ministry of



Justice did not have a reciprocal referral mechanism to ensure that child victims of human trafficking and other worst forms of child labor receive social services. (2,28)

The Taliban have said that the Ministry of Interior's anti-trafficking in persons offices have been inoperable since the August 15 takeover and that all computer systems, data, and staff in those offices are gone. These offices have yet to be restored as of the end of the reporting period. Due to assistance restrictions, the international community has been able to provide only limited resources to support to child trafficking victims. (41)

### IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

Afghanistan has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including lack of implementation.

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

| Coordinating Body   | Role & Description   |
|---|--|
| National Commission on Protection of Child Rights                       | Monitors and protects children's rights established under the Law on Protection of Child Rights and strengthens national coordination on child protection. Participants include representatives from the AGO, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, the Ministry of Education, and other bodies. (90,91) Includes an interministerial technical committee, chaired by the MoLSA Minister, to ensure that the Child Act is operational at the provincial and district levels. (90) Research was unable to determine whether this committee was active during the reporting period. |
| High Commission for Combating Crimes of Abduction and Human Trafficking | Addresses human trafficking in general, including child trafficking. Led by the Ministry of Justice; comprises nine ministries, such as MoLSA, and five other entities. (23,92) Focuses on <i>bacha bazi</i> . (35) Met twice during the reporting period. (2) Research was unable to determine whether this committee was active during the reporting period.   |
| Interministerial Steering Committee on Children and Armed Conflict      | Coordinates efforts to eliminate the recruitment and use of child soldiers. Led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and monitored by the UN and NGOs. (23) Research was unable to determine whether this committee was active during the reporting period.  |

### V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

Afghanistan has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that may hinder efforts to address child labor, including lack of implementation.

**Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor**

| Policy  | Description   |
|---|---|
| National Labor Policy                               | Includes objectives to eliminate the worst forms of child labor, such as those involving hazardous activities, to pass legislation prohibiting child labor, and effectively enforce child labor laws. (93) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement this policy during the reporting period.  |
| National Child Labor Strategy and Action Plan       | Aims to eliminate the worst forms of child labor by 2025 and all child labor by 2030. Makes recommendations to improve social protections and oversight. (5) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement this policy during the reporting period.  |
| National Anti-Trafficking in Persons Action Plan    | Organizes Afghanistan's response to human trafficking, including <i>bacha bazi</i> , with a three-pronged approach: mandates the National Child Protection Committee to find and respond to <i>bacha bazi</i> cases among Afghan civil servants; encourages the implementation of laws, the prevention of child recruitment, and the reporting of corruption by the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Interior, and the National Directorate of Security; and oversees the production of annual or semiannual interagency progress reports on addressing trafficking in persons. (94-96) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement this policy during the reporting period. |
| National Strategy for Children at Risk              | Creates a framework to provide social services to at-risk children and their families, and guides donors in contributing toward a comprehensive child protection system. Focuses specifically on working children, victims of child trafficking, child soldiers, and other children affected by conflict. (97) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement this policy during the reporting period.  |
| Policy for Protection of Children in Armed Conflict | Protects children from recruitment and sexual exploitation in the armed forces and provides services to children rescued from engagement in armed conflict. Assigns the Ministry of Defense and the Afghan National Police (ANP) with monitoring that children's rights are safeguarded and coordinating with CPAN chapters and the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission. (98) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement this policy during the reporting period.   |

# Afghanistan

## NO ADVANCEMENT

### VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2021, Afghanistan had programs that include the goal of preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including lack of implementation.

**Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor**

| Program                                       | Description   |
|---|---|
| Child Protection Units (CPUs) of the ANP†     | Units located within ANP recruitment centers to ensure that children are not recruited to join armed conflict. Operate in all provinces. (2) CPUs inspect <i>e-tazkeera</i> (ID cards) and compare them against the physical appearance of applicants; however, Afghanistan did not have sufficient CPU reporting channels to identify children, prevent them from joining the security forces, or provide shelter, services, and family reintegration. (99-101) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement this program during the reporting period or even possible following the Taliban takeover. |
| Juvenile Rehabilitation Center†               | Provides educational, social, and psychological support, and vocational training in Kabul to children who were previously engaged in armed conflict. (102,103) Nearly 800 children are project participants of the services provided by the Juvenile Rehabilitation Center; according to the Ministry of Justice. (99) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement this program during the reporting period.   |
| Asia Regional Child Labor Program (2019–2023) | Funded by ILO and implemented with UNICEF and the Institute for Development Studies, works with Afghanistan to ensure that policies on child labor align with ILO conventions while strengthening local and national Plans of Action. Contains a special focus on internally displaced persons and returnee migrants, along with other groups vulnerable to child labor and human trafficking. (104) ILO stated that activities under this program within Afghanistan were suspended. (41)  |

† Program funded by the Government of Afghanistan prior to the Taliban takeover.

### VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified for a future government that would advance the elimination of child labor in Afghanistan (Table 11).

**Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor**

| Area            | Suggested Action  | Year(s) Suggested |
|-----------------|---|-------------------|
| Legal Framework | Ensure that the minimum age for work applies to all children, including those engaged in informal employment.   | 2019 – 2021       |
|                 | Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the use of female children for prostitution and pornographic performances and the use of all children for the production of pornography.   | 2017 – 2021       |
|                 | Ensure that forced labor and debt bondage are criminally prohibited.  | 2015 – 2021       |
| Enforcement     | Establish Child Protection Action Networks in all of Afghanistan's 34 provinces and ensure that they can provide all services needed by victimized children.  | 2016 – 2021       |
|                 | Publish information on labor law enforcement efforts undertaken, including labor inspectorate funding, number of labor inspectors, number and type of child labor inspections, number of violations found, and number of child labor violations for which penalties were imposed and collected. | 2015 – 2021       |
|                 | Authorize the labor inspectorate to assess penalties for violations of Afghan law.  | 2015 – 2021       |
|                 | Ensure that labor inspectors and criminal investigators receive training on child labor.  | 2011 – 2021       |
|                 | Increase the number of labor inspectors to meet the ILO's technical advice and ensure that inspections are conducted throughout the country and in all sectors.   | 2011 – 2021       |
|                 | Simplify the child labor complaint mechanism to allow oral complaints and eliminate or waive the requirement that the individual filing a complaint must specify the legal grounds for the violation.   | 2015 – 2021       |
|                 | Ensure that the labor inspectorate conducts inspections throughout the country and not solely in the capital, Kabul.  | 2014 – 2021       |
|                 | Ensure that labor inspectors and criminal investigators are available and receive resources, including equipment and transportation, to enforce criminal child labor laws.  | 2012 – 2021       |
|                 | Establish a referral mechanism between criminal authorities and social services.  | 2020 – 2021       |
|                 | Ensure that child victims of human trafficking and other worst forms of child labor are correctly identified as victims, and referred to appropriate social services, not arrested, detained, or subjected to mistreatment or torture.  | 2014 – 2021       |
|                 | Ensure that children are not recruited into armed groups or government-affiliated military entities, including by ending the falsification of identity documents.   | 2020 – 2021       |



**Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)**

| Area                | Suggested Action   | Year(s) Suggested |
|---------------------|--|-------------------|
| Enforcement         | Publish information on criminal law enforcement efforts undertaken, including training for criminal investigators, number of investigations, violations found, prosecutions initiated, and convictions.  | 2021              |
|                     | Investigate, arrest, prosecute, and when appropriate, sentence government officials complicit in facilitating the worst forms of child labor, such as <i>bachi bazi</i> and child soldier recruitment.   | 2021              |
| Coordination        | Ensure that all coordinating bodies are active and able to carry out their intended mandates, including by ensuring that detailed enforcement data are reported to appropriate coordination bodies and that meetings are held at the mandated intervals. | 2017 – 2021       |
| Government Policies | Ensure activities are undertaken to implement key policies related to child labor and publish results from activities implemented during the reporting period.   | 2016 – 2021       |
| Social Programs     | Institute a birth registration campaign so that age is documented, and children can register for school.   | 2015 – 2021       |
|                     | Ensure activities are undertaken to implement key social programs to address child labor during the reporting period and make information about implementation measures publicly available.  | 2021              |
|                     | Institute programs to increase access to education and improve security in schools, especially for girls in the Shia Hazara community.   | 2014 – 2021       |
|                     | Build capacity for the government to have sufficient Child Protection Unit reporting channels to identify children, prevent them from joining the security forces, and provide shelter, services, and family reintegration.                              | 2020 – 2021       |

## REFERENCES ON FILE