

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

In 2020, Mali made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. Mali took steps to prevent children from being recruited and used by the Malian Armed Forces, issuing orders prohibiting the use of children under the age of 15 and banning children from military camps. Mali also enacted a decree permitting the implementation of the mining code, which prohibits child labor in artisanal gold mines. In addition, the government published data on its labor law enforcement efforts, including the number of labor inspections conducted and violations identified. However, despite new initiatives to address child labor, Mali is assessed as having made only minimal advancement because it implemented a practice that delays advancement to eliminate child labor. The government provided support to non-state armed groups that recruited and used child soldiers in Mali. Children in Mali are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in hereditary slavery and in armed conflict. Children also engage in dangerous tasks in agriculture, particularly in the production of cotton and rice, and in artisanal gold mining. Although Mali's 2012 Trafficking in Persons Law criminalizes trafficking for the purpose of slavery, it does not more broadly criminalize the act of slavery; Malian law also does not explicitly prohibit using, procuring, or offering children for illicit activities, and allows children under the age of 18 to be penalized as a direct result of forced recruitment by armed groups. In addition, resource constraints severely limited the Malian authorities' ability to fully implement the National Plan to Combat Child Labor, and social and rehabilitation services for victims of the worst forms of child labor remain inadequate.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Mali are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in hereditary slavery and in armed conflict. (1-7) Children also engage in dangerous tasks in agriculture, particularly in the production of cotton and rice, and in artisanal gold mining. (2,4,7) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Mali. 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 to 14	49.2 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	43.3
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	26.0
Primary Completion Rate (%)		49.6

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2017, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2021. (8)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS 5), 2015. (9)

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	Cultivating,† harvesting,† ginning,† processing, transporting,† and applying chemical fertilizers,† particularly in the production of cotton and rice (4,7,10,11)
	Raising livestock,† including oxen and small ruminants (7,10)
	Fishing,† including collection, throwing nets, and piloting small boats (10,12)

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

Sector/Industry	Activity
Industry	Artisanal gold mining,† including digging shafts,† extracting ore from underground tunnels,† crushing ore,† and amalgamating ore with mercury† (2,4,7,13-17)
	Rock quarrying (7)
	Assembling fishing canoes† (10)
	Construction (7)
Services	Domestic work† (2,4,7,18,19)
	Street work,† including market vending,† begging,† and in the transportation sector (2,10,19,20)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced labor in artisanal mining, domestic work, street work, production of salt, and farming (including in the production of rice), each sometimes as a result of human trafficking (4,7,21-23)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (2,24-26)
	Forced recruitment by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict (4-7,27,28)
	Hereditary slavery (1,4,19,24)
	Forced begging by Koranic teachers, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (2,4,7,13,24)

† 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.

Children, especially of the Bellah community (black Tuareg), are subject to hereditary slavery in northern and southwestern Mali. (1,4,12,19,29,30) Some children are born into slavery, while others are born free but remain in dependent status. As a result, these children, along with their parents, are forced to work for their parents' former masters in exchange for food, money, and lodging. (29,30) Child slaves perform agricultural or domestic labor, and are often sexually abused. (29,30) In 2020, the Malian National Commission on Human Rights identified at least 670 displaced child slaves from the southwestern region of Mali. Research indicates that the number of persons displaced as a result of hereditary slavery increased during the reporting period relative to the previous year. (7)

Children, particularly those of Songhai ethnicity, work in debt bondage in the northern salt mines of Taoudenni. (29,31) Thousands of children in the north, south, and west are also involved in artisanal gold mining, in which they are exposed to toxic substances and extreme temperatures, transport heavy loads, and work long hours. (4,7,13,16,17,32) Research indicates that around mining sites, children are also victims of commercial sexual exploitation and domestic servitude. (7) An NGO study from September 2019 to March 2020 identified 483 children at two mining sites. Most of the children were from Mali, but some were from other countries, and most of the latter were victims of commercial sexual exploitation. (7) To address this issue, during the reporting period Mali passed a decree to implement the mining code, which forbids child labor in artisanal gold mines. (7,12)

Some boys placed in the care of Koranic teachers for education are forced by their teachers to beg on the street or work in fields, after which they must surrender the money they have earned to their teachers. (4,7,13,29,31) Research indicated that children forced to beg were not only from Mali, but also from neighboring countries, including Burkina Faso, Senegal, and Côte d'Ivoire. (7) While the government frequently encountered cases of child begging, it did not have the capacity or the appropriate facilities to provide shelter and social services to these children, given the widespread nature of this issue in the country. (7)

During the reporting period, there was an increase in child trafficking, forced child labor, and forced recruitment of children by non-state armed groups in Mali due to insecurity and the COVID-19 pandemic. (7) There was also an increase in the recruitment and use of child soldiers by non-state armed groups in an effort to replace fallen combatants. (12,17,33,34) As in past years, children continued to be forcibly recruited and used by the Platform, the Coordination of Movements for Azawad, Katiba Macina, Dan Na Ambassagou, and Dozos, among others; in 2020, at least 335 Malian, Nigerien, and Burkinabe children were recruited by these groups. The UN reported 284 cases of children being forcibly recruited during 2020, compared to 215 for the previous year. (7,12,17,35) Three of these children remained with armed groups, while the rest were removed and reintegrated with their

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families. (7) In addition, armed groups controlled some artisanal gold mines in northern Mali and used children for forced labor at those locations. (7,12,32)

In 2020, the Malian Armed Forces (FAMA) employed 23 children in courier and domestic service roles. (12,35,36) As of March 2020, however, all children were demobilized. (7,12,32) The government also continued to provide in-kind support to non-state armed groups which forcibly recruited and used children in armed conflict. (2,21,29,37-40)




Although the Constitution guarantees free and compulsory education, many children, especially girls, do not attend school because parents are expected to pay fees for registration, uniforms, and supplies, which are cost prohibitive for many impoverished families. (2,4,19,31,41-43) Long distances between villages and schools and lack of classes and teachers, are also significant barriers to education. (7) In addition, many children in Mali are not registered at birth, which may prevent them from accessing services such as education. (2,4,31,44) Research indicates that there are hundreds of thousands of children in Mali without birth certificates, and that while lack of documentation does not exclude children from schooling, these students may not be allowed to take national exams. (7) Evidence also suggests that incidences of physical, psychological, and sexual abuse, including corporal punishment, prevent some children from remaining in school. (19,31) In 2020, numerous attacks on schools by armed groups in northern Mali resulted in lootings, destruction of learning materials and infrastructure, and occupancy of school facilities by armed groups. (4,12,45,46) Research indicates that internally displaced children faced interruptions in their education and barriers to enrolling in school after fleeing their homes. (7)

In 2020, insecurity, teacher strikes, and the pandemic significantly affected children's access to education throughout Mali. The pandemic closed all schools from mid-March to the beginning of May; teacher strikes began in January 2020 and lasted until September 2020 when the teachers' unions and the transition government reached a salary agreement. (7) This agreement allowed the government to partially reopen schools and organize exams in October 2020. However, schools were then closed again in December due to the second wave of the pandemic. (7)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Mali 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 laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Mali's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including recruitment by non-state armed groups and use of children in illicit activities.

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Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Article 326 of the Labor Code; Article L.187 of the Law 2017-021 modifying the Labor Code (48, 47)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Hazardous Occupations List; Article 1 of the 2017-4388 Amendment to Hazardous Occupations List; Articles 326 and D.189.14 of the Labor Code (48-50)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Hazardous Occupations List; Article 1 of the 2017-4388 Amendment to Hazardous Occupations List; Article 189 of the Labor Code (48-50)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	No		Article L.6 of the Law 2017-021 modifying the Labor Code; Article 1 of the Trafficking in Persons Law (47,51)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 244 of the Penal Code; Articles 1 and 7 of the Trafficking in Persons Law; Article 63 of the Child Protection Code (51-53)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 228 of the Penal Code; Articles 1 and 7 of the Trafficking in Persons Law; Article 57 of the Child Protection Code (51-53)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		Article 183 of the Penal Code; Articles 18 and 50 of the Child Protection Code (52,53)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 17 of the Child Protection Code; Articles 31.23 and 31.31 of the Penal Code; Article 5 of the Military General Statute (52-54)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 17 of the Child Protection Code; Articles 31.23 and 31.31 of the Penal Code; Article 5 of the Military General Statute (52-54)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		Articles 31.23, 31.31, and 32 of the Penal Code (52)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15‡	Articles 26 and 34 of the Law of Education (55)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 18 of the Constitution (41)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (52)

In November 2020, Mali passed into law a decree permitting the implementation of the mining code, which forbids child labor in artisanal gold mines. The code will prohibit child labor in traditional goldmines, and the use of mercury, cyanide, acids, and explosives, per Article 50 of the new code. (7,12,32) Article 189f of the new code states that mining titles will be canceled if a mining operation uses child labor or any other practices that violate human rights. Article 194 imposes penalties for the use of child labor in quarries, ranging from an imprisonment of 11 days to 2 years and the payment of fines ranging from \$1,700 to \$8,500. (7,32)

The Ministry of Justice, in collaboration with UNODC, revised the 2012 Anti-Trafficking Law to provide aggravated penalties if trafficking is committed against a child under the age of 18, whereas previously, aggravated penalties were only applied if the child was under the age of 15. However, drafts of the migrant smuggling law and anti-trafficking law remained pending. (2,7,12,37,56)

In December 2020, the National Technical Monitoring Committee of the Safe Schools Declaration co-facilitated a workshop with the UN on a draft bill on the protection of education from attacks. The bill specifies the obligations of parties to conflict vis-à-vis the protection of education from attacks, and criminal sanctions for attacks on schools and related offences. (35)

Articles 189.35 and 189.36 of the Labor Code allow children between the ages of 12 and 14 to perform domestic or light seasonal work, as long as it does not impede school attendance or exceed 4.5 hours of work per day. (48) The light work framework does not meet international standards because it applies to children under the age of 13. In addition, the law does not specify the conditions under which light work may be undertaken. (47,57,58)

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Although Mali's Trafficking in Persons Law criminalizes human trafficking for the purpose of slavery, it does not more broadly criminalize the act of slavery, and Mali's labor code, while prohibiting forced labor generally, does not specifically prohibit hereditary slavery. In addition, Malian law does not prohibit using, procuring, or offering a child for the production and trafficking of drugs as established by international standards. (1,2,51,53)

While the Child Protection Code provides protection for children under age 18, and the Penal Code establishes criminal penalties for several of the worst forms of child labor, some offenses included in the Child Protection Code do not carry criminal penalties, such as the prohibition of military recruitment by non-state armed groups. (13,52,53) Although the Child Protection Code prohibits children under age 18 from participating in armed conflicts or joining the armed forces, it only provides for imprisonment of perpetrators in the case of repeat offenses. Meanwhile, the Penal Code only provides criminal penalties if the children are under age 15. (52,53)

Article 28 of the Penal Code states that crimes committed out of self-defense or under a force that could not be resisted should not be penalized as prescribed by the Penal Code. Although a 2013 Inter-Ministerial Circular on the Prevention, Protection, and Rehabilitation of Child Soldiers states that Article 28 of the Penal Code is applicable to children involved in armed conflict, the Circular does not define the age range of the children it covers. (52,59) This means that some children under age 18 who are affiliated with non-state armed groups may be penalized as a direct result of being a victim of the worst forms of child labor. (52,59)

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, including insufficient financial resources allocation.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Labor's National Directorate of Labor	Enforces labor laws and investigates Labor Code infractions, including those regarding child labor. (31,60)
National Unit to Fight Against Child Labor (CNLTE)	Coordinates and enforces Mali's efforts to eliminate child labor, especially its worst forms. Chaired by the Ministry of Labor and includes representatives from other government ministries, civil society, and worker and employer organizations. (2,61,62) One labor inspector in each region is designated as the point of contact for CNLTE to facilitate regional coordination, and CNLTE also has 19 dedicated child labor inspectors and comptrollers. (2,4,7,63)
Ministry of Justice	Enforces criminal laws, including those related to child labor, child trafficking, child commercial sexual exploitation, the recruitment and use of child soldiers, and the use of children in illicit activities. Initiates and coordinates with courts the implementation of laws related to the worst forms of child labor with the support of several other ministries, including the Ministries of Security, Territorial Administration, Child Promotion, Defense, and Labor. (4,7,29,60)
Ministry of Internal Security's Police Brigade for the Protection of Morals and Children	Investigates crimes against children, including human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. (2,4,24)
Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children, and the Family (MPFEF)	Develops and implements programs to protect vulnerable children and monitors alleged violations of child labor laws, including those related to the worst forms of child labor. (4,42,60)

The National Unit to Fight Against Child Labor (CNLTE) received a budget of \$56,000 (30 million CFA) in 2020, which represents a 40 percent decrease from the 2019 budget due to the need to reallocate funds as a response to the pandemic. (7,12) The CNLTE considers its budget insufficient given the extent and severity of the child labor problem in Mali, as it lacks funding to meet its office needs and it does not have a vehicle or fuel for its staff to carry out its mission. (7)

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Labor Law Enforcement

In 2020, labor law enforcement agencies in Mali took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient financial and human resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2019	2020
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$85,000 (4)	\$123,555 (7)
Number of Labor Inspectors	113 (4)	113 (7)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Yes (48)	Yes (48)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Yes (4)	Yes (7)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	Yes (4)	Yes (7)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (4)	Yes (7)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	671 (4)	571 (7)
Number Conducted at Worksite	671 (4)	571 (7)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (4)	Unknown (7)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (4)	Unknown (7)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (4)	Unknown (7)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (4)	Yes (7)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (4)	Yes (7)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (48)	Yes (48)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (4)	Yes (7)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (4)	Yes (7)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (4)	Yes (7)

The number of labor inspectors is likely insufficient for the size of Mali's workforce, which includes approximately 6.5 million workers. According to the ILO's technical advice of a ratio approaching 1 inspector for every 40,000 workers in less developed countries, Mali would employ about 161 inspectors. (63-65) Although all regions have labor inspectors, government services are limited or non-existent in some areas due to the insecurity caused by the presence of non-state armed groups. (2,4,63) In addition, reports indicate that a lack of trained staff, equipment, transportation, and funding hampered both CNLTE and the labor inspectorate's ability to conduct child labor inspections and legal proceedings, especially in remote areas of northern Mali. (4,31,57,63,66) CNLTE did not remove any children from the worst forms of child labor. (7) Research indicates that the government rarely collects statistics on the matter, and that there is no central database to maintain any data related to worst forms of child labor. (12) In 2020, CNLTE developed a training module for farmers related to the new hazardous occupations list and held a number of workshops related to the hazardous occupations list. Four new employees of the labor inspectorate received an initial training at Mali's National School of Administration. (7) In 2020, the government budgeted \$371,747 (CFA 200 million) to fight human trafficking, allowing the government to partner with NGOs to undertake activities, including awareness campaigns, training sessions, and workshops. (7) Employees of the CNLTE received one training related to child labor in 2020. (7)

While the budget for the National Directorate of Labor and other labor offices decreased from approximately \$1.2 million (CFA 666,309,000) in 2019 to approximately \$675,275 (CFA 363,973,000) in 2020, the labor inspectorate budget increased from \$85,000 (CFA 50,000,000) to \$123,555 (CFA 66,596,000). (7) In addition, the Brigade for the Protection of Morals and Children (BPMC) reported 10 investigation cases of mistreatment of children employed as house cleaners. Research indicates that the reported number of child labor victims is likely lower than the actual number of victims given the widespread nature of child labor and inadequate enforcement of child labor laws in Mali. (4,7) However, the government did not provide specific data for this report from labor inspections carried out in the field, including the number of child labor law violations, the number of child labor violations found, the number of penalties imposed, or the number of penalties imposed that were collected in 2020. While the CNLTE's annual report usually includes information related to children removed from child labor by NGOs, there is no information on children removed from child labor as a result of labor inspections. (7)

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Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2020, criminal law enforcement agencies in Mali 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 insufficient financial and human resource allocation.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2019	2020
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Yes (4)	Yes (7)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (4)	Unknown (7)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (4)	Yes (7)
Number of Investigations	2 (4)	Unknown (7)
Number of Violations Found	46 (4,37)	Unknown (7)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	2 (4)	Unknown (7)
Number of Convictions	0 (4)	0 (7)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (4)	Unknown (7)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (4)	Yes (7)

In 2020, the BPMC benefited from a significant increase in its personnel as 23 new staff members were recruited. (7,12) Research indicates that the number of law enforcement agents is inadequate given the prevalence of the worst forms of child labor in the country. (4) During the reporting period, the government did not provide information on training on new laws related to the worst forms of child labor, nor on imposed penalties for violations related to the worst forms of child labor. (7) While the government made efforts to increase training and resources, research found that Mali lacks trained staff, equipment, transportation, and funding to adequately conduct criminal law enforcement efforts related to the worst forms of child labor, particularly in remote areas. (4,29,63,67) Reports indicate that because of political instability, which may hinder labor and criminal law enforcement efforts in northern Mali, the prevalence of hereditary slavery, forced labor, and trafficking in persons has worsened since the conflict began in 2012. (4,12,29,31,63,68) Research showed that the BPMC budget was insufficient, and the force had only one vehicle to conduct inspections and very limited amounts of fuel for each quarter in 2020. Furthermore, there were reports that staff did not receive office materials and had to use personal resources for official documents and furniture. (7,12)

The government's judicial authorities were unable to provide comprehensive and complete statistics on the number of child labor cases investigated, prosecuted, or convicted during the reporting period. In 2020, the BPMC arrested 10 Koranic teachers in Bamako who are alleged perpetrators of forced child begging, with at least 3 Koranic teachers referred to the judicial system for legal action. (7) In addition, one case of suspected child trafficking was prosecuted, but the defendant was acquitted. Malian judicial authorities reported at least three additional prosecutions related to child labor. (7) Many justice sector actors noted government officials' interference in cases involving slavery-related practices in an effort to have the charges dismissed. (37)

In October 2020, the Minister of Defense and the Chief of Defense Staff issued orders to military commanders prohibiting the use of children under age 15 and instructing army personnel to ban the presence of children around military camps. (12,69) By March 2020, the ministry also demobilized 23 children who had been employed as couriers and in domestic service roles with the FAMa. (7,12,32,35) In addition, it designated a child soldier focal point to coordinate with international organizations. (70) Despite these efforts, the Inspector General of the FAMa, General El Hadji Ag Gamou, also leads the Imghad Tuareg and Allies Self-Defense Group (GATIA), a subgroup of the pro-government signatory armed group coalition, Platform, which splintered in 2019. (12,17,71) During the reporting period, the government continued to provide in-kind support to GATIA, overseen by General Gamou, and to other non-state armed groups that recruited and used children in armed conflict. (2,12,21,29,37-40) Research found no indication that the government investigated either the actions of General Gamou and other members of the national armed forces or those of non-state armed groups who allegedly recruited and used child soldiers. (7) In addition, the government continued to keep child soldiers in

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custody until it established their age, with at least 15 children still held in detention at the close of the reporting period. Although there has reportedly been an improvement in the transfer process, the UN noted difficulty in securing the release of these children, who are sometimes held with adults, until their age can be confirmed to the satisfaction of the Malian authorities. (12,32)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government 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 clarity about the roles of coordinating bodies.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Coordinating Committee for the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons and Associated Practices	Coordinates government efforts to combat human trafficking. Chaired by the Ministry of Justice and includes various government agencies and civil society groups. (2,24,72,73) While the National Coordinating Committee for the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons and Associated Practices was active during the reporting period, research could not identify its specific activities. (12)
Inter-Ministerial Committee to Prevent Grave Violations Against Children	Led by MPFEF, conducts awareness-raising campaigns to prevent the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict and implements reintegration programs for former child soldiers. (2) Conducts joint missions with international partners to determine the presence of children in armed conflict. (60) While the Inter-Ministerial Committee to Prevent Grave Violations Against Children was active during the reporting period, research could not identify its specific activities. (12)
Artisanal Gold Mining Summit Committee	Monitors recommendations, including the ban on child labor in artisanal gold mines, from a summit on artisanal mining, and comprises gold mining associations and local government officials. (74) Research was unable to determine whether the Artisanal Gold Mining Summit Committee was active during the reporting period.
Directorate for the Promotion of Children and Family (DPCF)	Led by MPFEF, coordinates issues related to child labor, including child trafficking. Implemented the National Policy for the Promotion and Protection of Children. (7) During the reporting period the DPCF supported agencies responsible for birth registrations. (7)

During the reporting period, the MPFEF's Directorate for the Promotion of Children and Family (DPCF) continued to support formal registration of children at birth, particularly in the North, through support for other government departments involved in registration. Research indicates that children born in the midst of security crises are often unable to acquire a birth certificate. (7) Furthermore, the DPCF also worked to reunite children affected by the security crisis in the north with their families. (7) CNLTE held two research missions aimed at identifying child labor. It also held trainings and awareness campaigns on artisanal gold mining in southern Mali. (7,12) CNLTE provided support to agencies and organizations combating child labor, hosted approximately 10 activities with NGOs and relevant associations regarding the prevention of child labor, and held 2 meetings of the National Guiding Committee on Child Labor. (7) The government also held human trafficking awareness trainings for judicial officials in multiple regions. A training on child begging was also held for religious and community leaders (*marabouts*) in the capital. (12,32)

Reports indicate that there is confusion with regard to roles and a lack of coordination between CNLTE and the National Coordinating Committee for the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons and Associated Practices. (28,29,68)

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 insufficient funding and ineffective implementation.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
National Plan to Combat Child Labor (PANETEM) (2011–2020)	Aims to eliminate the worst forms of child labor by strengthening child labor laws, training relevant government officials, and mobilizing funds for social programs to withdraw children from child labor. Implemented by CNLTE. (10,57) In 2020, CNLTE was not able to conduct any monitoring activities under PANETEM due to budget constraints, which CNLTE attributed to the Government of Mali's decision to allocate increasing financial resources to health, defense, and security. (7)

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Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor (Cont.)

Policy	Description
National Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (2018–2022)	Aims to enhance the legal framework to prevent human trafficking, improve implementation of the laws, and provide effective protection and care for victims. Led by the National Coordinating Committee for the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons and Associated Practices. (4,29,75) Calls for the establishment of a formal body to coordinate government efforts to combat human trafficking and allocates a budget of \$10 million for the 5-year period, or \$2 million per year. The government has pledged to contribute \$350,000 annually and intends to mobilize development partners and the private sector to provide the remaining financial support needed to implement the plan. (28,32) In 2020, Mali developed awareness campaigns in collaboration with UNODC, and trained around 100 law enforcement officers, prosecutors, and judges on human trafficking investigations and prosecutions. (12)
Inter-Ministerial Circular and the Protocol on the Release and Transfer of Children Associated with Armed Groups and Armed Forces	Provides a framework that highlights the responsibility of the government to prevent children's involvement in armed conflict, and to protect and reintegrate those children who become involved. (2,5,38,76) During the reporting period, at least 70 child soldiers were removed from armed groups. (12)
National Strategic Education Sector Plan (2017–2026)	Sets out a comprehensive map to improve the quality of and access to basic and secondary education, especially in conflict-affected areas of northern Mali. Led by the Ministry of Education and supported by international donors. (57,60,77) In 2020, the Government of Mali allocated \$625,007 to fund education. (7)

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (2,4,79-82)

The “Child Travel Card” program (*Titre de Voyage pour Enfant*) created by DPCF in 2002 remained a part of the directorate's efforts to combat child trafficking by facilitating proper identification of children traveling within and outside of Mali. Failure to show a child travel card will prompt follow-up actions to confirm whether the child is a victim of trafficking for forced labor, commercial sexual exploitation, or forced migration. (7) Research indicates that this program does not cover foreign citizens. (12)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2020, the government funded programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including adequacy of efforts to address the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Mali Government and NGO-Implemented Programs†	The Education for All Program (<i>Le Programme d'Education pour Tous</i>) is funded by the Global Partnership for Education (<i>Partenariat Mondial pour l'Education</i>), which receives funding from multiple agencies, including USAID and the Government of Mali, and is implemented by the Ministry of Education. This program was active during the reporting period. (7,12) The Mali Girls Leadership and Empowerment (2018–2021) through Education (Mali GLEE), a \$15 million project implemented by Winrock International, aims to provide educational opportunities to girls by decreasing barriers to education, improving girls' safety in school and their communities, and increasing their knowledge and adoption of positive health behaviors. (7) Education Recovery Support Activity (2015–2020), a \$16 million project implemented in Menaka and Gao, supported Mali's peace accord implementation in the field of education by providing basic quality education services and livelihood opportunities for children and youth in two regions of the North affected by conflict. The project established more than 150 accelerated education program (AEP) classrooms and trained 290 AEP teachers; nearly 11,000 out-of-school children ages 9 to 14 were enrolled. (7) Caritas Mali, an NGO that operates three reception centers in Bamako—including a center for boys—provides assistance to girls who are victims of or at risk of commercial sexual exploitation and girls living on the streets. (7)
ILO-Implemented Projects to Combat Child Labor	ILO-implemented projects to combat child labor and forced labor in supply chains. These projects include the Clear Cotton Project on Child and Forced Labor (2019–2022), an \$8.5 million EU and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the UN-funded global project to combat child labor and forced labor in cotton and textile supply chains, and ACCEL Africa, a \$26.5 million Government of Netherlands-funded regional project to combat child labor in gold mining and cotton supply chains. (63,83-85) The South-South Project on Decent Work* (<i>Programme Sud-Sud sur le Travail Décent</i>) is funded by Brazil (\$400,000) and its implementation by the ILO started in 2020. The program aims to provide labor inspection training and capacity building to labor inspectors and improve working conditions in cotton production areas by promoting decent work principles and providing social protections to producers. (7) Research shows that the ILO provided the National Directorate of Labor with financing (via a COVID-19 pandemic fund) to undertake activities related to pandemic prevention in the work environment, including activities dedicated to preventing child labor. (7)

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Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor (Cont.)

Program	Description
National Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Program	\$25 million UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali-implemented program that aims to provide reintegration services to former combatants in Mali, including children. (2,76,86) During the reporting period, 88 children were removed from armed groups. (12)
Global Action Against Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants (GLO.ACT)	\$13 million EU-funded global project implemented by UNODC, UNICEF, and IOM to combat human trafficking and migrant smuggling. (87,88) During the reporting period, GLO.ACT held trainings for magistrates and law enforcement agents. In addition, the Dutch Embassy in Mali funded a research project to study the scope of the issue of human trafficking in the country. (12)
Foreign Government and Company-Implemented Programs	Fighting Child Labor in the Value Chain of the Cotton, Clothing, and Textile Industries (<i>Lutte contre le Travail des Enfants dans la Chaîne de Valeur Coton, Textile, et Habillement</i>) is a project funded by the EU and FAO to be implemented by ILO between 2018 and 2022. The project will reinforce the national legal framework for combating child labor and forced labor in the cotton sector. (7) The project will include mapping the supply chain of cotton and clothing, taking into account gender considerations. The project will also include a quantitative survey of child labor and forced labor in the cotton sector, and will involve activities and policies at the local, regional, and national levels. (7) Promoting the Principles and Fundamental Rights in the Cotton Supply Chain Work Environment (2018–2020) was a project funded by Inditex, a Spanish multi-national company working in the cotton sector. The project targeted cotton producers in the cotton-producing region of Sikasso and aimed to promote a favorable work environment for the protection of fundamental worker rights. (7) The project includes awareness campaigns and trainings for relevant partners, local associations, and community leaders to develop a monitoring system to ensure respect for fundamental worker rights in the cotton sector. The program also promotes women's rights and women's leadership in cotton producer organizations and cooperatives. (7) While the foreign government- and company-implemented programs were active during the reporting period, research could not identify activities that occurred. (12)
U.S. Government-Funded Programs	USDOS-funded programs to Combat Descent-Based Slavery: implemented by the American Bar Association (ABA) and the ILO to combat hereditary slavery and forced child labor in Mali. (3,37,89,90) USAID Country Program (2016–2020): \$600 million USAID-funded program that supported the government's efforts to improve education, food security, and health, and to provide humanitarian assistance in crisis areas. (91) During the reporting period the ABA held multiple workshops before ending its program, and the USAID Country Program continued to be implemented. (12)

* Program was launched during the reporting period.

† Program is funded by the Government of Mali.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (2,4,92,93)

Mali does not fund or participate in programs to address child labor in domestic work, forced begging, or commercial sexual exploitation. (94)

An informal referral mechanism exists among NGOs, UN bodies, police, and other government agencies to allow withdrawal of children from armed conflict and provide social services to victims of the worst forms of child labor. (4,28,63) Despite these efforts, reports indicate that resources and facilities available to social services agencies are inadequate. (4,7,29,31,63)

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 Mali (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that draft anti-trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling legislation bills are finalized and adopted.	2020
	Ensure that the Labor Code establishes a minimum age no younger than age 13 for light work and specifies the conditions under which light work may be undertaken, in accordance with international standards.	2015 – 2020
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits hereditary slavery in addition to other forms of forced labor.	2017 – 2020
	Criminally prohibit the use, procurement, or offering of children for illicit activities, including for the production and trafficking of drugs, in accordance with international standards.	2009 – 2020
	Criminally prohibit the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups and in any armed conflict.	2013 – 2020

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

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the specific ages of children protected by the Inter-Ministerial Circular on the Prevention, Protection, and Rehabilitation of Child Soldiers are in compliance with international standards, and ensure that children under age 18 are not penalized as a result of being subjected to forced recruitment into armed conflict.	2009 – 2020
Enforcement	Increase labor inspectorate funding and resources, including equipment and transportation to carry out inspections, especially in remote areas of northern Mali.	2012 – 2020
	Significantly increase the number of labor inspectors to meet the ILO's technical advice.	2012 – 2020
	Ensure that there are sufficient enforcement officials throughout the country and that they receive additional training, transportation, and equipment necessary to adequately enforce laws related to child labor, including its worst forms.	2019 – 2020
	Publish information on enforcement efforts, including the number of children removed from child labor situations as a result of labor inspections, child labor violations found, child labor penalties imposed and collected, training on new laws related to the worst forms of child labor, and the number of penalties imposed for the worst forms of child labor.	2010 – 2020
	Ensure that children are identified and removed from worksites in which they are subjected to the worst forms of child labor.	2020
	Ensure that children are not imprisoned for their association with armed groups, and that they are not kept in detention centers with adults.	2020
	Publish information on criminal law enforcement, including whether training on new laws was provided, and whether penalties for violations of the worst forms of child labor were imposed.	2020
	Implement the provisions of the Inter-Ministerial Circular and the UN-signed Protocol, which require that children in detention for their association with armed groups be transferred to social services or to UN child protection agencies for appropriate reintegration and social protection services.	2013 – 2020
	Ensure that criminal law enforcement efforts related to child labor are properly funded and resourced.	2020
	Ensure that government officials are sanctioned and held accountable for interference in legal cases related to crimes of the worst forms of child labor, including in cases of slavery and the recruitment and use of child soldiers.	2019 – 2020
	Ensure that perpetrators of the worst forms of child labor are prosecuted and convicted in accordance with the law.	2013 – 2020
	Ensure that the government does not support non-state armed groups, which recruit children into their ranks.	2020
Coordination	Ensure that all coordinating bodies are able to carry out their intended mandates.	2012 – 2020
	Clarify roles for coordinating mechanisms combating child labor, and improve coordination among relevant agencies.	2010 – 2020
Government Policies	Ensure that the National Plan to Combat Child Labor is implemented, including by allocating sufficient financial and human resources.	2012 – 2020
	Publish activities undertaken to implement key policies related to child labor during the reporting period.	2020
Social Programs	Ensure that the Malian Armed Forces do not recruit any children.	2020
	Enhance efforts to eliminate barriers and make education accessible for all children, including girls and those living in conflict-affected areas, by removing school-related fees, expanding school infrastructure, increasing teacher availability, providing free school supplies, and taking measures to ensure the safety of children and teachers in schools.	2010 – 2020
	Increase birth registration rates to ensure that children have access to social services, including education.	2010 – 2020
	Ensure that the military and non-state armed groups do not occupy schools.	2018 – 2020
	Institute new programs to address child labor in all relevant sectors, including domestic work, forced begging, and commercial sexual exploitation.	2009 – 2020
	Ensure that government social services have sufficient resources and facilities to provide the necessary care for victims of the worst forms of child labor, including for children used in armed conflict.	2016 – 2020

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