# Mauritius

# Moderate Advancement

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

# Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of Child Labor

Children in Mauritius are engaged in the worst forms of child labor, primarily in commercial sexual exploitation (CSEC), although the extent of the problem is unknown.([1-3](#_ENREF_1)) Table 1 provides key indicators on children’s work and education in Mauritius. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

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

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Working children, ages 5 to 14:** | Unavailable |
| **School attendance, ages 5 to 14 (%):** | Unavailable |
| **Children combining work and school, ages 7 to 14 (%):** | Unavailable |
| **Primary completion rate (%):** | 99.3 |

*Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2012, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2014.*([4](#_ENREF_4))

*Source for all other data: Understanding Children’s Work Project’s analysis, 2014.*([5](#_ENREF_5))

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children’s work by sector and activity.

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

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Sector/Industry** | **Activity** |
| Agriculture | Agriculture, activities unknown\* ([1](#_ENREF_1)) |
| Services | Domestic service\* ([1](#_ENREF_1)) |
|  | Work on the streets, activities unknown\* ([1](#_ENREF_1)) |
| Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡ | Commercial sexual exploitation sometimes as a result of human trafficking\* ([1-3](#_ENREF_1)) |

\* Evidence of this activity is limited and/or the extent of the problem is unknown.

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

Some children are lured into CSEC by their peers or through false offers of other employment. Some adult prostitutes force their sons and daughters into CSEC.([1](#_ENREF_1), [2](#_ENREF_2))

# Legal Framework on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

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

**Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Convention** | **Ratification** |
| ILO C. 138, Minimum Age | ✓ |
| ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor | ✓ |
| UN CRC | ✓ |
| UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict | ✓ |
| UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography | ✓ |
| Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons | ✓ |

The Government has established relevant laws and regulations related to child labor, including its worst forms (Table 4).

**Table 4. Laws and Regulations Related to Child Labor**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Standard** | **Yes/No** | **Age** | **Related Legislation** |
| Minimum Age for Work | Yes | 18 | Employment Rights Act ([6](#_ENREF_6)) |
| Minimum Age for Hazardous Work | Yes | 18 | Employment Rights Act ([6](#_ENREF_6)) |
| List of Hazardous Occupations Prohibited for Children | Yes |  | Occupational Safety and Health Act ([7](#_ENREF_7)) |
| Prohibition of Forced Labor | Yes |  | Constitution ([8](#_ENREF_8)) |
| Prohibition of Child Trafficking | Yes |  | Combating Trafficking in Persons Act ([9](#_ENREF_9)) |
| Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children | Yes |  | Child Protection Act and Criminal Code ([3](#_ENREF_3), [10](#_ENREF_10)) |
| Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities | Yes |  | Child Protection Act ([10](#_ENREF_10)) |
| Minimum Age for Compulsory Military Recruitment | N/A\* |  |  |
| Minimum Age for Voluntary Military Service | N/A\* |  |  |
| Compulsory Education Age | Yes | 16 | Education Act ([11](#_ENREF_11), [12](#_ENREF_12)) |
| Free Public Education | Yes |  | Education Act ([11](#_ENREF_11), [12](#_ENREF_12)) |

\* No conscription or no standing military.

The Government continues to work on a comprehensive children’s bill designed to harmonize current laws related to children and make sure they are in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.([1](#_ENREF_1), [13](#_ENREF_13))

# Enforcement of Laws on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor, including its worst forms (Table 5).

**Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Organization/Agency** | **Role** |
| Inspection and Enforcement Division of the Ministry of Labor, Industrial Relations, and Employment (MOLIRE) | Enforce all labor laws, including those related to child labor.([14](#_ENREF_14)) |
| Office of the Ombudsperson for Children | Investigate any suspected or reported case of child labor or violation of a child’s rights.([15](#_ENREF_15)) |
| Police Brigade for the Protection of Minors (Minors’ Brigade) | Patrol areas such as arcades, bus terminals, and other areas in which youth are vulnerable to involvement in commercial sexual exploitation.([3](#_ENREF_3), [14](#_ENREF_14)) Maintain a database of all trafficking incidents of children and refer all cases of CSEC to the Child Development Unit (CDU).([2](#_ENREF_2)) |
| Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare (MOGE) CDU | Enforce legislation related to children as well as implement policies and programs related to child development.([1](#_ENREF_1)) Receive tips on all forms of child abuse, including commercial sexual exploitation and child trafficking, through two telephone hotlines.([14](#_ENREF_14)) Provide follow-up assistance to victims.([16](#_ENREF_16)) Provide child welfare officers to accompany victims as they receive immediate medical care and work in conjunction with the police if an official statement is needed.([2](#_ENREF_2)) Develop a central database and standard operating procedures for sharing information and taking action to address child labor.([13](#_ENREF_13)) |

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

***Labor Law Enforcement***

In 2013, the Ministry of Labor, Industrial Relations, and Employment’s (MOLIRE) 45 labor inspectors conducted 1,722 labor inspections. During these inspections, three cases of child labor were detected.([1](#_ENREF_1)) The three children were found packaging flour into plastic bags, and the cases have been referred and remain pending in the courts.([1](#_ENREF_1))

***Criminal Law Enforcement***

In 2013, four women and two men were arrested for child trafficking related to a possible child prostitution ring involving four girls in CSEC.([17](#_ENREF_17)) In 2013, 70 Government officials from a collection of agencies including the Police and Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare (MOGE) received training on preventing CSEC. In addition, more than 200 new police recruits received anti-trafficking in persons (TIP) training as part of basic training.([17](#_ENREF_17)) However, the Child Development Unit (CDU) suffers from a lack of resources and personnel, with only nine officers to serve Mauritius and one for Rodrigues Island, a Mauritius dependency, leading to insufficient detection of cases and service provision.([3](#_ENREF_3)) Reports from 2013 indicate that the Government has decreased anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts.([2](#_ENREF_2))

# Coordination of Government Efforts on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor, including its worst forms (Table 6).

**Table 6. Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Coordinating Body** | **Role & Description** |
| National Child Protection Committee (NCPC) | Coordinate the roles and responsibilities of the relevant ministries and ensure collaboration on effective intervention in cases involving children, including the worst forms of child labor. Also known as the Working Together Committee.([11](#_ENREF_11), [13](#_ENREF_13), [18](#_ENREF_18)) |
| National Children’s Council (NCC) | Serve as the executive of child protection programs and focus on child protection issues in the country as an independent, para-governmental entity under the auspices of the MOGE.([3](#_ENREF_3)) |
| NCPC subcommittee on CSEC | Facilitate interagency coordination on CSEC.([18](#_ENREF_18)) |

In 2013, significant overlap continues to exist between the committees involved in child protection issues, and the roles of the National Child Protection Committee (NCPC) and the National Children’s Council (NCC) are unclear in coordinating efforts to combat the worst forms of child labor. A formal and permanent anti-trafficking in persons (TIP) coordinating body does not exist, and a lack of understanding of TIP by government officials has prevented the Government from effectively addressing the issue.([2](#_ENREF_2), [19](#_ENREF_19)) Research was unable to determine if the NCPC subcommittee on CSEC is active or what activities it performs.

# Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

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

**Table 7. Policies Related to Child Labor**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Policy** | **Description** |
| Protocol of Assistance to Victims of Sexual Abuse\* | Lays out procedures for police and other officials to follow when handling sexual abuse cases, including commercial sexual exploitation.([14](#_ENREF_14), [20](#_ENREF_20)) |
| Child Safety Online Action Plan\* | Prevents sexual exploitation of children on the Internet by strengthening the legal framework and raising awareness among parents and children.([14](#_ENREF_14), [16](#_ENREF_16)) |
| National Policy Paper on the Family\* | Supports child welfare through holistic support for families, including job training for parents.([21](#_ENREF_21)) |
| Education and Human Resources Strategy Plan\* | Improves equity of access to primary, secondary, and technical/vocational education, among other goals.([22](#_ENREF_22)) |
| UNDP Country Program for Mauritius† | Improves the education of vulnerable children through reducing inequality in opportunities.([23](#_ENREF_23)) |

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

† Policy was launched during the reporting period.

# Social Programs to Address the Worst Forms of Child Labor

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

**Table 8. Social Programs to Address Child Labor**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Program** | **Description** |
| Income Support Program\*‡ | Government program provides money for 8,000 vulnerable families living below the Poverty Intervention Line. Has a 2014 budget of $33 million.([1](#_ENREF_1)) |
| Social Aid Program\*‡ | Government program provides assistance to 20,000 families. Increased the allowance provided in 2014.([1](#_ENREF_1)) |
| Education Priority Zones *(Zones d’Education Prioritaire) (ZEP)* \*‡ | Government program combats social inequalities by providing equal opportunities to all primary school children throughout the country. Program has been shown to reduce school dropout rates through enhanced community participation in education.([11](#_ENREF_11), [22](#_ENREF_22)) Providing increased funding for low-performing schools in 2014.([1](#_ENREF_1)) |
| Strategy for Special Education Needs and Inclusive Education Programs\*‡ | Government program for at-risk primary school students outside of school hours that focuses on physical education and the arts.([16](#_ENREF_16)) |
| Child Mentoring Scheme\*‡ | Government program provides one-on-one counseling to at-risk children through a government-selected mentor.([11](#_ENREF_11), [24](#_ENREF_24)) |
| Summer and Winter School Program\*‡ | Government program provides Summer and Winter schooling to enhance the successful transition from primary to secondary school for students.([11](#_ENREF_11), [14](#_ENREF_14)) |
| Second Chance Program\*‡ | Government program to educate and provide vocational training and life skills to those who dropped out after age 16.([11](#_ENREF_11)) |
| Awareness-Raising Programs in Schools, Community Centers, and in the Media on CSEC‡ | Government program to educate the public on preventing sexual abuse and exploitation of children.([3](#_ENREF_3), [11](#_ENREF_11), [25](#_ENREF_25)) |
| Workshops on CSEC‡ | Government holds workshops on CSEC with vulnerable groups.([3](#_ENREF_3), [25](#_ENREF_25)) |
| Drop-in Centers‡ | Government program provides counseling and referrals to victims of sexual abuse, including CSEC and trafficking of children.([26](#_ENREF_26), [27](#_ENREF_27)) |
| Shelters and Institutional Care‡ | Government program provides shelter and institutional care to victims who are referred to government or NGO shelters.([3](#_ENREF_3), [26](#_ENREF_26), [27](#_ENREF_27)) |

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

‡ Program is funded by the Government of Mauritius.

The Government’s institutional care facilities for victims of CSEC and other abuses are overcrowded, service providers are overtaxed and lack appropriate training, and institutions do not have appropriate standards of care, leading to inadequate service provision.([3](#_ENREF_3)) In addition, child victims of prostitution are sometimes placed by court order in residential centers for youth on probation. Child victims of prostitution placed in such facilities may not receive appropriate treatment.([3](#_ENREF_3))

# Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor, including its worst forms, in Mauritius (Table 9).

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

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

1. U.S. Embassy- Port Louis. *reporting, January 16, 2014*.

2. U.S. Department of State. "Mauritius," in *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2013*. Washington DC; June 19, 2013; <http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/2013/>.

3. United Nations Human Rights Council. *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, Najat Maalla M'jid*. New York; November 9, 2011. Report No. A/HRC/19/63/Add.1. <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Children/SR/A.HRC.19.63.Add.1.pdf>.

4. UNESCO Institute for Statistics. *Gross intake ratio to the last grade of primary. Total*. [accessed February 10, 2014]; <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Pages/default.aspx?SPSLanguage=EN>. Data provided is the gross intake ratio to the last grade of primary school. This measure is a proxy measure for primary completion. For more information, please see the “Children's Work and Education Statistics: Sources and Definitions” section of this report.

5. UCW. *Analysis of Child Economic Activity and School Attendance Statistics from National Household or Child Labor Surveys*. Analysis received February 13, 2014. Reliable statistical data on the worst forms of child labor are especially difficult to collect given the often hidden or illegal nature of the worst forms. As a result, statistics on children’s work in general are reported in this chart, which may or may not include the worst forms of child labor. For more information on sources used, the definition of working children and other indicators used in this report, please see the “Children's Work and Education Statistics: Sources and Definitions” section of this report.

6. Government of Mauritius. *Employment Rights Act*, Act No. 33 of 2008, enacted September 19, 2008. [source on file].

7. Government of Mauritius. *The Occupational Safety and Health Act*, Act No. 28 of 2005, enacted October 28, 2005. [source on file].

8. Government of Mauritius. *Constitution of the Republic of Mauritius*, enacted March 12, 1968. <http://www.gov.mu/portal/site/AssemblySite/menuitem.ee3d58b2c32c60451251701065c521ca/?content_id=03654555fc808010VgnVCM100000ca6a12acRCRD#pro>.

9. Government of Mauritius. *The Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act 2009*, Act No. 2 of 2009, enacted May 8, 2009. <http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---ilo_aids/documents/legaldocument/wcms_126787.pdf>.

10. Government of Mauritius. *Child Protection Act*, Act No. 30 of 1994, enacted April 1, 1995. [source on file].

11. Mauritius Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment. *Updated Report Following the 2010 US Report–Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labour*; July 19, 2012. [source on file].

12. Government of Mauritius. *Education Act*, enacted December 28, 1957. [source on file].

13. Government of Mauritius. *Comments*. Submitted in response to U.S. Department of Labor publication "Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor, September 30, 2013". Port Louis; January 11, 2013. [source on file].

14. U.S. Embassy- Port Louis. *reporting, January 29, 2013*.

15. Government of Mauritius. *The Ombudsperson for Children Act*, Act no. 41 of 2003, enacted November 20, 2003. [source on file].

16. U.S. Embassy- Port Louis. *reporting, December 7, 2010*.

17. U.S. Embassy- Port Louis. *reporting, February 18, 2014*.

18. U.S. Department of State official. E-mail communication to USDOL official. June 18, 2013.

19. U.S. Embassy- Port Louis. *reporting, February 19, 2013*.

20. ILO Committee of Experts. *Individual Observation concerning Worst Forms of Child Labor Convention, 1999 (No. 182) Mauritius (ratification: 2000) Published: 2008*; accessed February 20, 2013; <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en>.

21. Government of Mauritius. *National Policy Paper on the Family*. Port Louis; 2010. [Hard Copy on File].

22. Government of Mauritius. *Education and Human Resources Strategy Plan 2008-2020*. Port Louis; October 2009. [source on file].

23. UNDP. *Country Programme Document for the Republic of Mauritius (2013-2016)*. New York; June 25, 2013. <http://www.undp.org/content/dam/rba/docs/Programme%20Documents/Mauritius%20CPD%202013-2016%20%28en%29.pdf>.

24. U.S. Embassy- Port Louis. *reporting, January 20, 2012*.

25. Government of Mauritius. *Written communication*. Submitted in response to U.S. Department of Labor Federal Register Notice "Request for Information on Efforts by Certain Countries to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor". Port Louis; January 19, 2010. [Source on file].

26. U.S. Department of State. "Mauritius," in *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2013*. Washington, DC; February 27, 2014; <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm#wrapper>.

27. U.S. Embassy- Port Louis. *reporting, February 18, 2010*.