

In 2017, Mauritius made a significant advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government established a mechanism to coordinate child labor efforts, obtained its first prosecution for child trafficking under the Combating Trafficking in Persons Act, and established a hotline to report cases of child labor. The government also established a mutual assistance agreement to improve services provided to victims of the worst forms of child labor; moved the national exam to graduate primary education from the sixth grade to the ninth grade to increase enrollment, and continued to fund programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. However, children in Mauritius engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also engage in child labor in agriculture. The government lacks a national policy to address all relevant worst forms of child labor, and social programs to combat child labor are insufficient to adequately address the extent of the problem.



Agalega Islands, Cargados Carajos Shoals, and Rodrigues are not shown.

I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Mauritius engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. (1; 2; 3; 4; 5) Children also engage in child labor in agriculture. (1; 3; 4; 6) 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

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	Unavailable
Primary Completion Rate (%)		101.1

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2016, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2018. (7)
Data were unavailable from Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis, 2018. (8)

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	Producing and harvesting vegetables (1; 3; 4)
	Feeding livestock (6)
	Fishing, including diving, and casting nets and traps (9; 4)
Industry	Working in factories and masonry (10)
Services	Domestic work (1; 4)
	Working in apparel shops and restaurants (4)
	Street work, including vending, begging, and carrying goods in public markets (1; 3; 4; 11; 12)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1; 2; 3; 4; 5)
	Use in illicit activities, including selling drugs (4)

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

Some children in Mauritius are lured into commercial sexual exploitation by their peers or family members, or through false offers of other employment. (10; 5; 1) Mauritius has never conducted a national child labor survey, and therefore information on the prevalence of child labor in the country is limited. (4)

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Evidence suggests that incidents of physical and psychological abuse, including corporal punishment of students by teachers, prevent some children from attending school, which increases their risk of engaging in the worst forms of child labor. Because of discrimination, children with disabilities face serious barriers in accessing education. (1; 2; 13; 14)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR 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 laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Mauritius' legal framework to adequately protect children from child labor, including with the recruitment of children by non-state armed groups.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards: Yes/No	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Sections 6 and 12 of the Employment Rights Act (15)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Section 12 of the Employment Rights Act (15)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Section 8 of the Occupational Safety and Health Act (16)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 6 of the Constitution; Article 2 of the Combating Trafficking in Persons Act (17; 18)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 11 of the Combating Trafficking in Persons Act; Article 13A of the Child Protection Act (18; 19)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 14 of the Child Protection Act; Article 253 of the Criminal Code (19; 20)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 30.1b-e, 38a, 41.1f, and 41.2 of the Dangerous Drugs Act (21)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment			
State Compulsory	N/A*		
State Voluntary	N/A†		
Non-state	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Article 37.2 of the Education Act (22)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 35 of the Education Act (22)

* No conscription (23)

† No standing military (23)

During the reporting period, the government continued to draft a comprehensive bill aiming to harmonize the existing legal framework related to children's rights and strengthen legal provisions for child protection. (24; 4; 11)

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 authority of the Ministry of Labor, Industrial Relations, Employment, and Training (MOLIRE) that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Labor, Industrial Relations, Employment, and Training (MOLIRE)	Enforce all labor laws, including those related to child labor. (25; 4)
Office of the Ombudsperson for Children	Investigate any suspected or reported case of child labor or violation of a child's rights. Propose laws and policies to advance children's rights. (2; 26; 27; 4)
Police Brigade for the Protection of Minors (Minors' Brigade)	Investigate crimes related to the worst forms of child labor, including child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. (2; 24; 4) Maintain a database of all trafficking incidents involving children and refer all cases of commercial sexual exploitation to the Child Development Unit. (28)
Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions	Undertake criminal proceedings on laws related to the worst forms of child labor, in coordination with the Minors' Brigade and the judicial courts. (29; 30)
Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare's (MOGE) Child Development Unit	Enforce legislation related to children and implement policies and social programs related to child development. Provide social services to victims of the worst forms of child labor, including human trafficking. (31; 32; 4; 33)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2017, labor law enforcement agencies in Mauritius took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the authority of MOLIRE that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including with penalty assessment authorization.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2016	2017
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$1.2 million (34)	\$1.5 million (4)
Number of Labor Inspectors	85 (35)	95 (4)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	No (34)	No (4)
Training for Labor Inspectors		
Initial Training for New Employees	Yes (34)	Yes (4)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	Yes (34)	Yes (4)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (34)	Yes (4)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	1,848 (34)	3,012 [‡] (4)
Number Conducted at Worksites	1,848 (34)	3,012 [‡] (4)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (34)	0 (4)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties were Imposed	N/A (34)	0 (4)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that were Collected	N/A (34)	0 (4)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (34)	Yes (4)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (34)	Yes (4)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (34)	Yes (4)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (34)	Yes (4)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (34)	Yes (4)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (34)	Yes (4)

[‡] Data are from January 1, 2017 to October 31, 2017. (4)

In June 2017, MOLIRE organized a nationwide awareness-raising campaign as part of World Day Against Child Labor and established the 151 hotline to receive reports of child labor, as well as those related to the worst forms of child labor such as trafficking in persons. (4; 36)

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Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2017, criminal law enforcement agencies in Mauritius took actions to combat child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including with insufficient resource allocation.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2016	2017
Training for Investigators		
Initial Training for New Employees	Yes (34)	Yes (4)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A (34)	N/A (4)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (34)	Yes (4)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (34)	4 (37)
Number of Violations Found	Unknown (34)	4 (37)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (34)	6 (38)
Number of Convictions	0 (34)	3 (37)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (34; 10)	Yes (4)

In 2017, the Minors' Brigade maintained a staff of 54 agents who are distributed in five geographic police divisions. (39) During 2017, the first prosecution for child trafficking under the Combating Trafficking in Persons Act took place and was transferred to the court system, with a final resolution in March 2018 that resulted in a conviction with a 3-year imprisonment sentence. (38) Research indicates that the police were investigating 11 human trafficking cases by the end of the reporting period, although it is unknown how many of these cases involved children. (29) Research revealed that criminal law enforcement agencies lacked staff, transportation, and other resources to properly enforce criminal laws related to the worst forms of child labor. (25; 40) In addition, reports indicate that coordination between the police and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions has been limited, mainly due to a lack of training and insufficient case tracking, which hinders efforts to investigate and prosecute child trafficking cases. The government participated in a conference on human trafficking in November 2017 to address such gaps. (29; 38)

During 2017, MOGE's Child Development Unit established a mutual assistance agreement to improve the referral process with the Minors' Brigade to improve services to victims of the worst forms of child labor. (4; 38)

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 with coordination among key mechanisms.

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

Coordinating Body	Role and Description
Coordinating Committee on Child Labor*	Elaborate policies, approve programs, and coordinate, monitor, and evaluate efforts to combat child labor in Mauritius. Chaired by the MOLIRE, comprises representatives from the Ministry of Education, the Minors' Brigade, the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, and local and international organizations. (4; 41)
Inter-Ministerial Committee on Human Trafficking	Coordinate anti-trafficking efforts in Mauritius. Chaired by the Attorney General's Office comprises representatives from the MOLIRE, the MOGE, and other ministries. (35; 42; 5) In 2017, organized a workshop for government officials and civil society groups on the legal framework to combat human trafficking. (43)
National Child Protection Committee (NCPC)	Coordinate and implement activities on children's rights, including efforts to combat the worst forms of child labor. Chaired by the MOGE, and also known as the High Powered and Working Together Committee. (31; 4; 33)
National Children's Council (NCC)	Under the auspices of the MOGE, coordinate child protection efforts in Mauritius as an independent, para-governmental entity. (2; 25; 4) In 2017, organized awareness-raising campaigns on child protection and human trafficking. (4; 29)

* Mechanism to coordinate efforts to address child labor was created during the reporting period.

In 2017, a lack of coordination among key mechanisms hindered the government's efforts to combat the worst forms of child labor. (4; 5) In addition, the National Child Protection Committee was inactive during the reporting period. (4)

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 with the coverage of all the worst forms of child labor.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
Child Safety Online Action Plan	Aims to prevent online sexual exploitation of children by strengthening the legal framework and developing awareness-raising programs. Implemented by the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, in conjunction with the MOGE, the Minors' Brigade, and the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children. (2; 44; 45) In 2017, organized workshops to raise awareness on social media and commercial sexual exploitation. (4)
Education and Human Resources Strategy Plan (2008–2020)	Aims to improve equity of access to primary, secondary, and technical and vocational education, and to provide social services for youth. Overseen by the Ministry of Education. (46; 47) In 2017, took a step to increase school enrollment and decrease truancy by changing the timing of the national examination for primary education completion from the sixth grade to the ninth grade. (4)
Government Development Program—Achieving Meaningful Change (2015–2019)	Aims to increase access to social protection services for vulnerable populations, including children, and emphasizes a zero tolerance policy for the use of children in drug trafficking. (48; 49; 50) In 2017, established a partnership with the World Bank to provide funding for the implementation of the policy. (51)

Research found no evidence of policies to combat other worst forms of child labor, such as commercial sexual exploitation. In addition, the government did not adopt the National Plan to Combat Human Trafficking that was drafted in 2016. (32; 42; 4; 52; 39)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2017, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including with the adequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Awareness-Raising Programs on Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking†	Educate the public on preventing commercial sexual exploitation of children and human trafficking. (5) In 2017, the police conducted awareness programs for 1,646 students in 96 primary and secondary schools. (4)
Community Child Protection Program†	Support child protection activities nationwide. In 2017, created School Child Protection Clubs in 22 schools throughout the country to raise awareness about child exploitation. (33; 4)
Drop-in Centers, Shelters, and Institutional Care†	Provide rehabilitation services to victims of commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking. Monitored by the Child Development Unit. (2; 24; 29; 33) In 2017, provided reintegration services to over 500 child victims. (4)
IOM Country Program	IOM program to build capacity of relevant government agencies to protect children from exploitation and human trafficking. (32; 53)
Education Assistance Programs†	Increase access to quality primary education for vulnerable children, including the Eradication of Absolute Poverty Program to provide educational support to 7,500 households in 229 geographic pockets of poverty and in the Education Priority Zones to provide equal opportunities to primary school children throughout the country. (2; 47)

† Program is funded by the Government of Mauritius.

Although the government has established an oversight body to improve the effectiveness of institutional care facilities and shelters, evidence suggests that there continues to be a lack of appropriate standards of care, inadequate service provision, and overcrowding in some centers that house orphans, child victims of commercial sexual exploitation, and victims of other types of abuses. (34; 27; 54; 29; 5; 38)

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 Mauritius (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 into non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2017
Enforcement	Strengthen the Labor Inspectorate by authorizing inspectors to assess penalties.	2015 – 2017
	Increase the amount of training, human resources, and funding for agencies responsible for enforcing criminal laws related to the worst forms of child labor.	2011 – 2017
	Improve coordination between the police and the Director of Public Prosecutions to ensure that violations are adequately and prosecuted.	2017
Coordination	Streamline coordination between key mechanisms to combat the worst forms of child labor.	2012 – 2017
	Ensure that the National Child Protection Committee is active and fulfills its mission.	2017
Government Policies	Adopt a policy that addresses the worst forms of child labor, such as commercial sexual exploitation.	2014 – 2017
	Adopt the draft National Plan to Combat Human Trafficking.	2017
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the prevalence of child labor in Mauritius to inform policies and programs.	2013 – 2017
	Ensure that all children, including those with disabilities, can attend school without fear of physical or psychological abuse.	2014 – 2017
	Ensure that victims of commercial sexual exploitation have access to comprehensive and quality social services.	2010 – 2017

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