

Title	2008 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor - Colombia
Publisher	United States Department of Labor
Country	Colombia
Publication Date	10 September 2009
Cite as	United States Department of Labor, <i>2008 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor - Colombia</i> , 10 September 2009, available at: http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4aba3ee88.html [accessed 17 September 2010]

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Selected Statistics and Indicators on Child Labor	
Population, children, 5-14 years, 2001:	8,580,980
Working children, 5-14 years (%), 2001:	10.4
Working boys, 5-14 years (%), 2001:	14.1
Working girls, 5-14 years (%), 2001:	6.6
Working children by sector, 5-14 years (%), 2001:	
– Agriculture	35.6
– Manufacturing	12.6
– Services	49.9
– Other	1.9
Minimum age for work:	15
Compulsory education age:	15
Free public education:	Yes*
Gross primary enrollment rate (%), 2007:	116.3
Net primary enrollment rate (%), 2007:	87.3
School attendance, children 5-14 years (%), 2001:	90.4
Survival rate to grade 5 (%), 2006:	88.3
ILO Convention 138:	2/2/2001
ILO Convention 182:	1/28/2005
CRC:	1/28/1991
CRCOPAC:	5/25/2005
CRCOPSC:	11/11/2003
Palermo:	8/4/2004
ILO-IPEC participating country:	Yes

* In practice, must pay for various school expenses

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

In Colombia, children work in rural and urban areas, most of them in agriculture, industry, commerce, and service sectors. In rural areas, children work in the production of coffee, sugarcane, fruits, and vegetables. They also work in artisanal mining of emeralds, gold, clay, and coal under dangerous conditions. In urban areas, they work in domestic service in third-party homes, bakeries, automobile repair, and food preparation. A high number of working

children live in the Eastern and Pacific regions and are not paid. The Colombian Family Welfare Institute (ICBF) estimates that about 80 percent of working children work in the informal sector. Children are also used in the cultivation of coca for illegal purposes and in the processing and transportation of illicit drugs.

Many children are victims of commercial sexual exploitation, including pornography, prostitution, and sexual tourism. According to reports by IOM and the Ministry of Social Protection (MSP), as of 2006 an estimated 25,000 minors work in the commercial sex trade in Colombia. A study conducted by ICBF, the University of Cartagena, and the Renacer Foundation found children engaged in commercial sexual exploitation in Cartagena. In Colombia, children are trafficked for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation, forced labor in domestic service, agriculture, mines and factories, forced recruitment as child soldiers, and begging. Children are trafficked internally from rural to urban areas. There are reports of children from Ecuador working as coca pickers and children from Honduras and Nicaragua working in forced-labor fishing.

Children in Colombia are recruited, sometimes forcibly, by insurgent and paramilitary groups to grow coca, serve as combatants, and perform forced labor in the country's ongoing conflict. As of 2008, an estimated 11,000 to 14,000 children are child combatants. Many are forced to participate in and are victims of human rights violations such as torture and murder. Girl combatants are subject to sexual exploitation by other group members. In 2007, the United Nations reported that children demobilized from the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) were not officially delivered to ICBF as required by the demobilization process. Reportedly, children have been used by government armed forces as informants. Many demobilized children have been held by government forces and agencies much longer than the 36 hours required by law before being turned over to ICBF. Only those who voluntarily left illegal armed forces are allowed to receive assistance from government demobilization programs.

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Constitution guarantees the protection of children against any form of exploitive or hazardous work. The minimum employment age in Colombia is 15 years. Adolescents under 15 years may perform artistic or cultural work. Authorization from a labor inspector or other designated authority is required for minors above 15 years to work. Adolescents aged 15 to 17 years who have received technical training provided by the National Training Service (SENA) or another certified training school could be authorized to work once the nature of the work and the risks related to its performance have been checked by the labor inspectors. Adolescents aged 15 and 16 years may only work 6 hours per day or 30 hours per week and until 6 p.m.; those aged 17 years may work 8 hours per day, 40 hours per week, and until 8 p.m. The law also prohibits minors from work that is exploitive or hazardous.

MSP Resolution No. 01677 of 2008 identifies the worst forms of child labor that are prohibited for all minors under 18 years. Minors are not permitted to perform most forms of work related to agriculture, fisheries, lumber, mining, industrial manufacturing, utilities, construction, heavy equipment, and transportation. Unskilled labor – including shoe shining, domestic service, trash collection, work in clubs and bars, and street sales – is also prohibited. Children are prohibited from working in activities that can encourage their sexual exploitation, such as erotic modeling. Also, minors may not work under conditions that may harm their psychosocial development. Individuals, businesses, and civic organizations must report child labor law violations.

The Constitution prohibits slavery, servitude, and human trafficking. Trafficking in persons is punishable by 13 to 23 years of prison as well as the payment of fines. It includes trafficking for the purpose of economic and sexual exploitation, forced labor, slavery, servitude, begging, sale of organs, and sexual tourism. Persons found guilty of trafficking children under 18 years receive sentences and fines that are 33 to 50 percent greater than the guidelines. Persons found guilty of trafficking children under 12 years receive sentences and fines that are 50 percent higher. Law 1236 of 2008 establishes that anyone who encourages a minor

under 14 years to engage in prostitution may be punished with 10 to 14 years of incarceration and fines. Inducement or coercion into prostitution is punishable with 9 to 22 years of incarceration and fines. If the victim is under 14 years, penalties increase from one-third to one-half for both induced and forced prostitution. Crimes involving child pornography are punishable by 10 to 14 years of incarceration and fines. The use of the mail or the Internet for sexual contact with a minor under 18 years is punishable by 10 to 14 years of incarceration and fines, with penalties increased up to half if the victim is under 14 years.

Posting child pornography on the Internet is punishable by fines and the cancellation or suspension of the Web site. Tourist agencies can be penalized for involvement in child sex tourism by fines and the suspension or cancellation of services. Forced prostitution and sexual slavery related to the country's ongoing armed conflict are punishable by imprisonment from 13 to 27 years as well as the payment of fines. The Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Tourism coordinates the efforts to combat sexual tourism and ensure that tourist agencies comply with the code of conduct established by law.

The compulsory and voluntary recruitment age for military service is 18 years. However, children under 18 years can join the armed forces with the consent of their parents. The law regards minors that participate in the country's hostilities as victims. Nonetheless, the Office of the Attorney General may choose to prosecute a minor who has violated international humanitarian law or committed genocide. The recruitment of minors by armed groups in relation to the ongoing conflict is punishable by 8 to 15 years in prison and fines. The commission of terrorist acts involving a minor is punishable by 16 to 30 years of incarceration and fines. Armed groups must place all minor recruits with ICBF in order to participate in the government's demobilization process. Punishments for crimes involving illegal drugs, such as cultivating, manufacturing, and trafficking, are increased if the crimes involve a minor.

MSP's 276 inspectors are responsible for conducting formal-sector child labor inspections. However, according to USDOS, the MSP does not have sufficient resources to enforce labor laws effectively. ICBF, the National Police, the Office of the Inspector General, the National Ombudsman, and local accountability offices are responsible for enforcing laws related to children. Between 1999 and 2007, 98 cases of trafficking in children have been investigated by the Office of the Attorney General, but only 15 persons have been accused and 3 have gone to trial. According to ICBF, 164 complaints of child labor and 280 of commercial sexual exploitation of children were received by September 2008. In addition, ICBF received 318 former child soldiers, mostly ex-combatants from the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), in its programs aimed at assisting children who joined illegal armed groups.

Current Government Policies and Programs to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor

During the reporting period, the Government of Colombia continued to implement the Plan for Childhood (2004-2015), which contains provisions relating to child labor, and to specific worst forms of child labor, including trafficking, recruitment into armed groups, and commercial sexual exploitation. The National Strategy to Eradicate the Worst Forms of Child Labor (2008-2015) identifies criteria for guiding future actions, such as making the family the center of intervention, considering the child's age when designing responses, reinforcing children's rights, improving education services for working children to prevent the worst forms of child labor, concentrating resources on priority sectors, and coordinating actions across agencies. The National Plan of Action for the Prevention and Eradication of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Boys, Girls, and Adolescents Less than 18 Years of Age (2006-2011) seeks to coordinate the efforts made by government agencies to combat commercial exploitation of children; improve the prevention, detection, and assistance to child victims; and disseminate best practices. The National Strategy to Combat Trafficking (2007-2012) aims to reduce human trafficking, including the trafficking of children, by carrying out preventive programs, providing social and legal services to victims, and improving the prosecution of cases and international cooperation. The Government continues to support the Interagency Committee for the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Children by Illegal Armed Groups, led by the Vice President, which coordinates the policies and programs to combat the recruitment of children by illegal armed groups and provides

technical assistance to local governments. In addition, ICBF continued to provide services to child victims of trafficking and commercial social exploitation, and child soldiers.

During the reporting period, the Government of Colombia continued to participate in a 39-month, USD 5.1 million project to combat child labor, funded by USDOL and implemented by Partners of the Americas, DevTech Systems, Inc., Mercy Corps, and the International Center of Education and Human Development (CINDE). The project seeks to withdraw 3,663 and prevent 6,537 children from exploitive child labor in Colombia. The Government also participated in a USDOL-funded 4-year USD 3.5 million project implemented by World Vision to combat exploitive child labor by improving basic education, which ended in December 2008. This project withdrew 1,521 and prevented 4,996 children from working in agriculture, commercial activities, manufacturing, and services.

With the support of the Government of Canada and technical assistance from ILO-IPEC, the Government continues to consolidate the National Plan for the Prevention and Elimination of Child Labor. It also participates in a 4-year, USD 3.3 million ILO-IPEC regional initiative to eradicate child labor, funded by the Government of Spain.

ICBF is carrying out an initiative to withdraw and prevent child labor in mining communities, providing services to 1,928 children and 2,398 families. With the support of USAID, MSP is carrying out the initiative "Complying and Improving," which encourages employers and workers to eliminate child labor. Under this program, construction, transportation, lottery, security, and ice cream companies as well as trade unions, have voluntarily agreed to eradicate child labor. In addition, the Government of Colombia participates in an initiative to combat child labor implemented by Save the Children that targets 1,800 working or at-risk children in 20 departments.

During the reporting period, 42 municipalities included the National Strategy for the Eradication of Child Labor in their Development Plans, with the collaboration of the Office of the Inspector General. Municipalities and departments also participate in an initiative to facilitate the adoption of plans to combat child labor under the National Strategy to Eradicate the Worst Forms of Child Labor, led by the Telefonica Foundation. Ten departments have created Regional Committees to Combat Human Trafficking, and nine have developed Plans of Action. ICBF, along with the Departmental Government of Cesar and the Office of the Inspector General, is carrying out a USD 300,000 project to eradicate child labor and commercial sexual exploitation of children in nine municipalities. The Interagency Committee for the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Children by Illegal Armed Groups has approved a set of strategies and activities to address the recruitment of children by illegal armed forces in 50 selected municipalities and 26 departments. To date, 47 municipalities and 2 departments have adopted action plans.

The Ministry of the Interior and Justice created a pilot Anti-Human Trafficking Operations Center (COAT), with technical assistance from UNODC and IOM. COAT provides tools to government officials who investigate and prosecute cases of trafficking in persons; it has a hotline and an information system and coordinates emergency assistance to victims of trafficking, including children. Colombian diplomatic missions also provide assistance to victims of trafficking. The Government of Colombia carried out a national awareness-raising campaign against trafficking in persons on TV and radio and in print ads during the reporting period. In addition, it conducted a campaign targeted to the tourism industry in 23 cities, providing information on commercial sexual exploitation and local resources for support. UNODC provided training to public prosecutors on trafficking issues.

The Colombia Ombudsman Office has an awareness-raising campaign aimed at children and adolescents to prevent their recruitment by illegal armed groups. IOM and ICBF continue to carry out a program that provides services to former child soldiers and seek to prevent further recruitment of children by armed groups, with funding from USAID, the Italian Development Agency, the Colombian Ministry of Education, and the local government of Bogota. Through December 2008, this initiative provided services to 4,079 children who were recruited by illegal armed groups, and 46,164 children were prevented from joining them.

UNICEF and the Government of Colombia are continuing their efforts to address the recruitment of children by illegal armed groups.

The Government of Colombia and other associates and member governments of MERCOSUR are carrying out the "Niño Sur" ("Southern Child") initiative to defend the rights of children and adolescents in the region. The initiative aims to raise awareness of commercial sexual exploitation, improve country legal frameworks, and exchange best practices to tackle issues related to victim protection and assistance. The Governments of Trinidad and Tobago and Colombia joined efforts to combat human trafficking. The Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Tourism is part of the Joint Group for the Elimination of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Tourism, which was created in 2005 and includes the Ministries of Tourism of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay, and Venezuela.
