

NO ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT COMPLICIT IN FORCED CHILD LABOR

In 2019, Afghanistan is receiving an assessment of no advancement. Despite initiatives to address child labor, Afghanistan is receiving an assessment of no advancement because government officials, particularly officers of the Afghan Local Police and Afghan National Police, were complicit in the use of commercial sexual exploitation of boys through the practice of bacha bazi, a practice that remains widespread throughout the country. The government failed to prosecute any government officials in bacha bazi cases in 2019, but convicted two civilians and indicted at least four others. During the reporting period, media reported allegations by human rights activists that at least 165 boys were sexually exploited at three public high schools in Logar



Province, with the perpetrators video recording some of the acts for blackmail purposes. The activists' research found evidence of involvement of dozens of educators, including teachers and principals. At the end of 2019, government investigators reported that while they uncovered evidence of child sexual assault in Logar, they had found no link between the abuse and educators in the Logar public school system. Two human rights activists who exposed the Logar network, however, were detained by the National Directorate of Security, physically mistreated, and subsequently fled the country with their families after receiving death threats. Although the government failed to prosecute Afghan Local Police or Afghan National Police officers implicated in bacha bazi crimes, it took a number of steps to combat bacha bazi and other forms of child labor and child trafficking, including establishing a National Child Protection Commission. However, children in Afghanistan engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in armed conflict and forced labor in the production of bricks and carpets, each sometimes the result of human trafficking. Afghanistan's labor inspectorate is not authorized to impose penalties for child labor violations, and the government lacks sufficient programs to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. In addition, Afghan law does not sufficiently criminalize forced labor, debt bondage, or commercial sexual exploitation of girls.

I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Afghanistan engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in armed conflict and forced labor in the production of bricks and carpets, each sometimes the result of human trafficking. (1-5) Table I provides key indicators on children's work and education in Afghanistan.

Table I. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	7.5 (673,949)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	41.8
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	4.6
Primary Completion Rate (%)		85.6

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2018, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2020. (6)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 4 (MICS 4), 2010-2011. (7)

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

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

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, including harvesting poppies (5,8-12)
	Herding (5,9,11-13)
Industry	Carpet weaving† (5,9,13-15)
	Construction, including gravelling, paving, and painting (5,9,12,13,16,17)
	Coal, gold, and salt mining† (18-22)
	Brickmaking (5,12-14,23,24)
	Working in metal workshops, including in the production of doors, windows, and water tanks (12,14,25,26)
	Working as tinsmiths and welders† (12,13,15)
Services	Domestic work (11,15,27,28)
	Transporting water and goods, including across international borders (9,29)
	Street work, including peddling, vending, shoe shining, carrying goods, and begging (9,12,15,30,31)
	Collecting garbage† (12,15,16,30,32)
	Washing cars (9,12,13)
	Selling goods in stores (12,13,25)
	Collecting and selling firewood (9,12,29,33)
	Repairing automobiles (12,16,34)
	Tailoring in garment workshops (12,24)
	Pushing loads on a wheelbarrow (<i>krachiwani</i>) (12,13,35)
	Working as waiters in restaurants (12,13,36)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Recruitment of children by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict (37,38)
	Forced recruitment of children by state armed groups for use in armed conflict (38)
	Use in illicit activities, including in the production and trafficking of drugs, and pickpocketing (4,5,12,26,30,36,39-42)
	Domestic work as a result of human trafficking (4,27)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (4,12,43-46)
	Forced labor in begging and in the production of bricks and carpets, and for use as assistant truck drivers, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1,2,4,14,15,26,36,47-49)

† 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.

Boys across the country are subject to commercial sexual exploitation through the practice of *bacha bazi*, which typically entails keeping a male or transgendered child for the purpose of sexual gratification. Although *bacha bazi* is illegal, it is defended by some as a cultural practice. The perpetrators include police commanders, military members, tribal leaders, warlords, members of organized crime groups, clergy, and other men, typically with some authority or financial influence, who conspire to make boys available for sex. (50,51) In some cases, these boys may also be forced to serve tea or dance at parties. (52,53) According to the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), the practice exists in all provinces of the country. (4,54,55) Orphans, runaways, school dropouts, and other marginalized youth are particularly at risk. Some boys are often sold into the practice by their families, while others are abducted from the street, including by police officers. (44,45,55) Members of the Afghan National Police, the Afghan Local Police, the Afghan National Army, and the Afghan Border Police, especially checkpoint commanders, exploit boys for *bacha bazi*. (57) Some victims are boys who work for government officials as tea servers or errand boys, but are also subjected to rape or other forms of sexual assault. (4,36,44,45,47,50,54-56) NGOs reported that Afghan security forces and pro-government militias—some of whom may have received direct financial support from the government—recruited boys specifically for use in *bacha bazi*. (4)

Minors complained that some teachers and principals pressured them to perform commercial sex acts to pass exams; physical evidence to support such claims, including audio and video recordings, came to light during the reporting period. (4) According to media and NGO reports, many of these cases went unreported or were referred to traditional mediation, which often allowed perpetrators to re-offend. Cases were further under-reported because the stigma associated with these crimes prevented the vast majority of child victims from

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bringing cases forward to law enforcement or seeking care. Some child victims also reported authorities forced them to have sex in exchange for pursuing their cases, or raped them and sent them to detention centers when they tried to report their abusers. (57)

In November 2019, media outlets reported at least 165 cases of the sexual abuse of boys at 3 schools by teachers, school managers, and local authorities in Logar Province. (42,52,53,58) Numerous videos of these sexual assaults were posted on social media. (42) Some boys were banished by their families, while families of other boys fled the region. (42,52) Two human rights activists who had researched the Logar abuse and made some of their findings public were taken into custody by the National Directorate of Security and released only after making video statements under duress in which they stated that their investigation and reporting had been incomplete and incorrect. (52,53,59,60) The activists subsequently received death threats and fled Afghanistan. (61)

Afghan children are victims of human trafficking both domestically and internationally. Some Afghan nationals overseas have subjected Afghan boys to *bacha bazi* in, for example, Germany, Hungary, North Macedonia, and Serbia. (62) Furthermore, Afghan boys are used for forced labor in agriculture and construction abroad, and girls are used for commercial sexual exploitation and domestic work in destination countries, primarily Iran and Pakistan. (4) In Afghanistan, children were subjected to human trafficking to settle their family's debt, sometimes as a result of their parents' drug addiction, by being forced to produce bricks and illicit drugs. (2,4,37) Many Afghan girls are subjected to forced marriage in exchange for money for their families. (63) In addition, traffickers in Iran exploit Afghan children in forced labor as beggars and street vendors and forced criminality, including drug trafficking and smuggling of fuel and tobacco. (4) There were widespread reports of child laborers being subjected to sexual violence within Afghanistan. (12,13,16,30) Girls from Iran, Pakistan, and China were subject of human trafficking to Afghanistan for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation. (63)

Widespread violence and lack of economic opportunities lead some Afghan children to leave Afghanistan. (64-68) Some children went to Iran specifically to engage in child labor. (69,70) According to the UN, some Afghan refugee children in Iran engaged in child labor and did not attend school. (27) The Iranian government and the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps continued to coerce Afghan children as young as age 12 to fight in Iranian-led and -funded Shia militias deployed to Syria by threatening them with arrest and deportation to Afghanistan. (4) Boys, especially those traveling unaccompanied, were particularly vulnerable to human trafficking. (47,70,71) Some Afghan boys were subjected to commercial sexual exploitation in Greece after paying high fees to be smuggled into the country. (4,47,71)

Armed groups and Afghan police recruited children for engagement in combat and security operations, including 58 by the Taliban, 3 by the Afghan National Police, and 1 each by the Afghan Local Police and a pro-government militia. (38) Low rates of birth registration and the falsification of identity documents contribute to the problem by making it difficult to determine a recruit's age. (70,72) Observers reported that some officials accepted bribes to produce false identity documents that indicated the recipient boys were older than age 18. (47) Nevertheless, the Child Protection Units at Afghan National Police recruitment centers reportedly prevented the recruitment of 439 children in 2019. (73)

In 2019, approximately 505,000 undocumented Afghans returned or were deported to Afghanistan: 485,000 from Iran and just under 20,000 from Pakistan. (74) Many returnees and deportees were unaccompanied minors. (4) Some deportee children are subject to sexual and physical violence or forced labor while in deportation process camps, particularly in Iran. (37,75) Many unaccompanied minor returnees faced similar problems. (76,77) An indeterminate number of children also returned from Europe, including those whose asylum applications had been rejected. (78-80) Such children are vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups and traffickers. These children have difficulties enrolling in school because they lack the necessary identity documents. (4,15,36,79) In 2018, 66 percent of undocumented returnee children did not attend school. Many of them were particularly

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vulnerable to child labor, including debt bondage in brick factories. (27,48,81-84) Some individuals who facilitate repatriation take returnees to brick factories and keep them in debt bondage to repay their transportation costs. (50) International organizations noted that traffickers specifically targeted these returnees for forced labor upon return to Afghanistan. (4)







Afghanistan suffered both drought and flooding, causing the internal displacement of approximately 296,000 individuals in 2019. (85,86) An additional 436,000 individuals were newly internally displaced persons (IDPs) due to the armed conflict. (85) Many of these IDPs were food insecure and resorted to child labor or selling children as a way of settling debt. (36,86-89) Child labor is particularly prevalent among urban IDPs, and these children are vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups. (17,36)

In 2019, UNICEF estimated that 3.7 million school-age children were out of school in the country, 60 percent of whom are girls. (90) Barriers to education for children included displacement of populations due to conflict, the use of schools as military bases, attacks on schools, living long distances from schools, school-related fees, lack of security, and lack of identity documentation. (17,91-93) Girls faced additional barriers to education including parents unwilling to allow them to attend school, lack of hygiene facilities, shortage of female teachers, and sexual harassment on the way to and from school. (15,91,93) In addition, schools do not provide sufficient services to children with disabilities and some nomad, or kuchi, children did not attend school because they traveled to tend livestock. (27)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Afghanistan 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 Afghanistan's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including debt bondage.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	15	Article 13 of the Labor Law (94)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 13 and 120 of the Labor Law; Article 613 of the Penal Code; Article 63 of the Law on Protection of Child Rights (94,96,103)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		List of Prohibited Jobs for Child Laborers; Article 613 of the Penal Code (95,96)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	No		Article 4 of the Labor Law; Article 37 of the Law on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (94,96-98)

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Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 510–512 of the Penal Code (96)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Article 18.2 of the Law on Elimination of Violence Against Women; Articles 510-512, 650, and 652–667, of the Penal Code (96,98)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		List of Prohibited Jobs for Child Laborers; Articles 1, 7, and 23 of the Counter Narcotics Law (95, 99)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 605–608 of the Penal Code (96)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Articles 510–512 of the Penal Code (96)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15‡	Article 17 of the Education Law; Article 609 of the Penal Code (96,100)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 17 of the Education Law (100)

* No conscription (101)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (102)

The Afghan Labour Law’s minimum age provision prohibits those under age 18, 15 for “light work,” from being “recruited as a worker.” However, the law defines “worker” as a person who is “recruited based on a definite contract,” meaning that the minimum age provision does not apply to those in informal employment Afghan law does not sufficiently criminalize forced labor or debt bondage.

Although the Penal Code explicitly prohibits and sets penalties for the use of male or transgender children for *bacha bazi*, Afghan law does not prohibit the use of girls for prostitution and pornographic performances. (27,96) Additionally, the legal framework does not adequately criminalize the use of children for the production of pornography. (96,98)

A Law on Protection of Child Rights was adopted and entered into force in 2019. The law reiterates some of the existing protections for children, such as the minimum age for hazardous work and protection of children from being exploited in begging. (103)

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 and Social Affairs (MoLSA) that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Child Protection Action Network (CPAN)	Operates as a coalition of government agencies, NGOs, and community and religious leaders. Receives complaints of child labor; investigates such cases, and refers them to NGO and government shelters that provide social services, and coordinate and provide case management. (36,104) Not all provinces have a CPAN chapter. The capacity of CPAN chapters is not uniform or based on need, and the type of intervention depends on members of a particular CPAN chapter and resources available. (36)
Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA)	Responds to complaints of child labor, child trafficking, and child sexual exploitation; refers cases to the Attorney General’s Office (AGO) and NGO shelters; and operates a shelter for trafficking victims in Kabul. (36)
Ministry of the Interior	Enforces laws related to child trafficking, the use of children in illicit activities, and child sexual exploitation. (36)
National Directorate of Security	Identifies human trafficking victims and refers these cases to the Ministry of the Interior. (36)
Attorney General’s Office (AGO)	Investigates and prosecutes human trafficking, abduction, and sexual exploitation cases. (36)

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Labor Law Enforcement

In 2019, labor law enforcement agencies in Afghanistan took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the authority of MoLSA that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including penalty assessment authorization.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2018	2019
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (36)	Unknown (5)
Number of Labor Inspectors	21 (36)	Unknown (5)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	No (36)	No (5)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	No (36)	No (5)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	Unknown (36)	Unknown (5)
Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown (36)	Unknown (5)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	Unknown (36)	Unknown (5)
Number Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (36)	Unknown (5)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (36)	Unknown (5)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A	N/A
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A	N/A
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown (36)	Unknown (5)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown (36)	Unknown (5)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (36)	Yes (5)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (36)	Unknown (5)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (36)	Yes (5)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	No (36)	No (5)

The Child Protection Action Network, of which MoLSA is a component, can respond to complaints of child labor, investigate cases, and issue warnings or refer criminal cases to the Attorney General's Office (AGO). However, a person wishing to file a complaint must specify the legal statutes for labor violations in writing, making it unlikely that citizens would be able to do so. (104,107)

In 2019, the government did not report the number of labor inspectors; however, as of December 2018, MoLSA had 27 inspector positions, 21 of which were filled. (5,36) The number of labor inspectors is likely insufficient for the size of Afghanistan's workforce, which includes more than 7.9 million workers. (108) According to the ILO's technical advice of a ratio approaching 1 inspector for every 40,000 workers in less developed economies, Afghanistan would employ about 200 labor inspectors. (105,109,110) Government officials, NGOs, and UNICEF acknowledge that the number of labor inspectors is insufficient. (105) Moreover, sources indicate that labor inspections take place only in the capital, Kabul. (5)

Business owners are not required to allow unannounced inspections. (105) Based on available information, MoLSA inspects only public organizations, such as government ministries, that are registered with MoLSA, but not private businesses or worksites within the informal sector. (27,36,104) Many forms of child labor, however, occur in the informal sector. (12) Government officials and other stakeholders stated that the government lacked resources, including training, for enforcement of child labor laws. (36)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2019, criminal law enforcement agencies in Afghanistan 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 training for criminal investigators.

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Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2018	2019
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Unknown (36)	Unknown (5)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (36)	Unknown (5)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (75)	No (111)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (36)	15 (111)
Number of Violations Found	Unknown (36)	17 (111)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	0 (36)	10 (111)
Number of Convictions	0 (36)	4 (111)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to The Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A	2 (112)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (75)	Yes (37)

In response to allegations in November 2019 of widespread sexual exploitation of children at schools in Logar Province, the Attorney General's Office (AGO) sent an investigative committee to Logar; the probe was ongoing at the end of 2019. By the end of the reporting period, two suspects had been referred to the court. (73) However, the government did not prosecute any government officials for *bacha bazi* crimes, despite the fact that police and other officials were heavily implicated in the practice. (4,36,47,51,55,75,113) Observers noted that perpetrators of *bacha bazi* often paid bribes to law enforcement, prosecutors, or judges who protected them from prosecution. (4) The AIHRC, Parliament, the Ministry of Education, and the Logar provincial government also conducted fact-finding missions in response to the allegations. (24) The AIHRC received nine videos of sexual abuse, although many more had already been shared with the media. (24,53,58) Shortly after, the AIHRC issued a summary report stating that the sexual abuse was not limited to schools, but was also occurring in work places of child laborers, particularly at brick kilns and in garment workshops. (113) AGO investigators did not publicly state any nexus between the sexual assaults on high school boys in Logar and Logar educators, despite reports of heavy involvement. However, the AIHRC in its summary report on Logar pointed to "some school officials and teachers" involved in the abuse. (24,61,73,113)

Moreover, victims of human trafficking were routinely prosecuted and convicted of crimes. (75,114) Male victims of child trafficking, especially those engaged in *bacha bazi* or armed conflict, were sometimes referred to juvenile detention or rehabilitation facilities on criminal charges, instead of to appropriate victim support services. (4,38,47,115,116) The government arrested, detained, and prosecuted for terrorism-related crimes some children younger than age 12 who had been forcibly recruited by non-state armed groups. NGOs reported that authorities housed some child trafficking victims in juvenile detention centers, sometimes for several years. (4) Such children are considered criminals even after being transferred to rehabilitation centers. (55) The UN reported that some of these children were subjected to torture and ill treatment. (116,117)

Although information was unavailable for 2019, government officials had previously stated that they lacked equipment and transportation to carry out investigations. (118) Based on available information, security agencies and the Ministry of Justice did not have a reciprocal referral mechanism to ensure that child victims of human trafficking and other worst forms of child labor receive social services. (36) However, during the reporting period, the Ministry of Interior conducted four training sessions with a major focus on human trafficking for 590 law enforcement officials, and an international NGO conducted trainings in which Ministry of Interior officials participated. (111)

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 efforts to address all forms of child labor.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Commission on Protection of Child Rights*	Monitors and protects children's rights established under the Law on Protection of Child Rights and strengthens national coordination on child protection. Met for the first time in 2019. Participants include representatives from the AGO, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), the Ministry of Education, and other bodies. (73,119) Includes an inter-ministerial technical committee, chaired by the MOLSA Minister, to ensure that the Child Act is operational at the provincial and district levels. (73)
High Commission for Combating Crimes of Abduction and Human Trafficking	Addresses human trafficking in general, including child trafficking. Led by the Ministry of Justice; comprises nine ministries, such as MoLSA, and five other entities. (27,97) The Commission, designed to meet quarterly, met only once in 2019 and focused on <i>bacha bazi</i> . (37) The Commission stated that ministries did not provide detailed enforcement information, making it difficult for the Commission to issue reports. (120)
Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee on Children and Armed Conflict	Coordinates efforts to eliminate the recruitment and use of child soldiers. Led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and monitored by the UN and NGOs. (27)

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

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

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

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
National Labor Policy	Includes objectives to eliminate the worst forms of child labor, such as those involving hazardous activities; pass legislation prohibiting child labor; and effectively enforce child labor laws. (121) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement this policy during the reporting period.
National Strategy for Children at Risk	Creates a framework to provide social services to at-risk children and their families, and guides donors in contributing toward a comprehensive child protection system. Focuses specifically on working children, victims of child trafficking, child soldiers, and other children affected by conflict. (124) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement this policy during the reporting period.
Policy for Protection of Children in Armed Conflict	Commits to protect children from recruitment and sexual exploitation in the armed forces, and provides services to children rescued from engagement in armed conflict. Assigns the Ministry of Defense and the Afghan National Police with monitoring that children's rights are safeguarded and coordinating with CPAN chapters and AIHRC. (125) In 2019, over 439 children were prevented from joining the Afghan National Police. (38)
National Child Labor Strategy and Action Plan†	Aims to eliminate the worst forms of child labor by 2025 and all child labor by 2030. Makes recommendations to improve social protections and oversight. (5) In September 2019, MoLSA partnered with the International Bureau for Children's Rights and UNICEF to draft a National Child Protection Policy and strengthen the capacity of MoLSA's Child Protection Secretariat. (5)

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2019, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including adequacy to address the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Child Protection Units (CPUs) of the Afghan National Police†	Units located within Afghan National Police recruitment centers to ensure that children are not recruited to join armed conflict. CPUs did not oversee Afghan Local Police and the government did not have sufficient CPU reporting channels to identify children, prevent them from joining the security forces, and provide shelter, services, and family reintegration. (126,127) Despite insufficient reporting channels between CPUS and the government, CPUs prevented the recruitment of at least 439 children. (73)
Juvenile Rehabilitation Center†	Center in Kabul that provides educational, social and psychological support, and vocational training to children who were previously engaged in armed conflict. (128,129) The shelter was operational in 2019. (111)

† Program is funded by the Government of Afghanistan.

In 2019, the Ministry of Public Health conducted approximately 1,300 meetings, workshops, and awareness raising campaigns for about 55,000 local and provincial government officials. Similarly, the Ministry of Hajj and

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Religious Affairs distributed pamphlets on human trafficking to about 54,000 individuals during Friday sermons in areas not controlled by the Taliban. (111)

There is no evidence of programs designed specifically to prevent and eliminate child labor in all relevant sectors, such as agriculture or the production of bricks. Moreover, the government acknowledged the dearth of shelters and government resources for victims of human trafficking. At times, the government placed child trafficking victims in orphanages, and some orphanages subjected children to human trafficking. (4) Some boys who are victims of human trafficking were arrested, and some were sent to juvenile rehabilitation centers due to the lack of shelters. (50,130)

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 Afghanistan (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the minimum age for work applies to all children, including those engaged in informal employment.	2019
	Ensure that forced labor and debt bondage are criminally prohibited.	2015 – 2019
	Ensure the law criminally prohibits the use of female children for prostitution and pornographic performances and the use of all children for the production of pornography.	2017 – 2019
Enforcement	Establish Child Protection Action Networks in all of Afghanistan's 34 provinces and ensure that they can provide all services needed by victimized children.	2016 – 2019
	Track and publish information on labor inspections, including labor inspectorate funding, number of labor inspectors, number and type of child labor inspections, and number of violations found.	2015 – 2019
	Authorize the labor inspectorate to assess penalties for violations of Afghan law.	2015 – 2019
	Ensure that labor inspectors and criminal investigators receive training on child labor.	2011 – 2019
	Increase the number of labor inspectors to meet the ILO's technical advice and ensure inspections are conducted throughout the country and in all sectors.	2011 – 2019
	Simplify the child labor complaint mechanism to allow oral complaints, and eliminate or waive the requirement that the individual filing a complaint must specify the legal grounds for the violation.	2015 – 2019
	Ensure that the labor inspectorate conducts inspections in private businesses and the informal sector.	2014 – 2019
	Ensure that labor inspectors and criminal investigators are available and receive resources, including equipment and transportation, to enforce criminal child labor laws.	2012 – 2019
	Prosecute and convict individuals, particularly government officials, who use children for engagement in the worst forms of child labor, including <i>bacha bazi</i> and child soldiering.	2018 – 2019
	Ensure that child victims of human trafficking and other worst forms of child labor are correctly identified as victims, and referred to appropriate social services, not detained or subjected to mistreatment or torture.	2014 – 2019
Coordination	Ensure all coordinating bodies are able to carry out their intended mandates, including by ensuring that detailed enforcement data are reported to appropriate coordination bodies and that meetings are held at the mandated intervals.	2017 – 2019
Government Policies	Implement the National Labor Policy and the National Strategy for Children at Risk.	2016 – 2019
Social Programs	Institute a birth registration campaign so that age is documented and children can register for school.	2015 – 2019
	Institute programs to increase access to education and to improve security in schools, especially for girls.	2014 – 2019
	Institute programs to address child labor in all relevant sectors, such as agriculture and bonded child labor in brick kilns.	2009 – 2019
	Provide financial support to open shelters for victims of human trafficking and to ensure that sufficient shelter services are available for male child trafficking victims.	2010 – 2019

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