

In 2022, Ghana made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government significantly increased the number of labor inspectors from 48 to 189 and labor inspections from 749 to 1,108. The government also supported the Alliance on Sustainable Cocoa, which works to improve the economic, social, and environmental sustainability of cocoa production and trade, including by addressing child labor. In addition, it improved its data sharing efforts with non-governmental organizations and other countries by providing timely responses to requests for information. However, children in Ghana are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in fishing and cocoa production. Prohibitions related to the commercial sexual exploitation of children do not meet international standards because protections do not extend to live performances. Ghana also does not prohibit the use of children for illicit activities, including in the production and trafficking of drugs. In addition, the government has not acceded to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child's Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography. Lastly, resource constraints severely limited the government's ability to adequately enforce labor laws and implement social programs.



### I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Ghana.

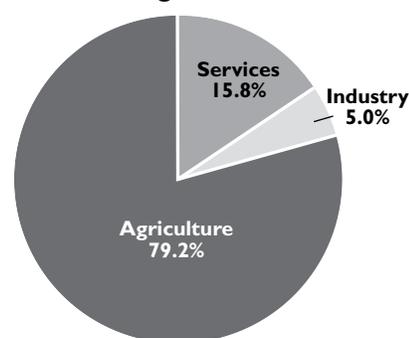
**Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education**

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	13.0 (927,591)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	89.9
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	13.2
Primary Completion Rate (%)		93.8

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2018, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Ghana Living Standard Survey (GLSS), 2016–2017. (2)

**Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14**



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 cocoa, including land clearing, using machetes and cutlasses for weeding, breaking cocoa pods, collecting cocoa pods with a harvesting hook, exposure to pesticides,† and carrying heavy loads† of water (2-9)
	Production of rice, palm oil and cotton, including weeding, and harvesting (10)
	Herding livestock, including cattle, hunting, and work in slaughterhouses (9)
Industry	Fishing, including for tilapia; preparing bait, nets, and fishing gear; launching, paddling, and draining canoes; diving for fish; casting and pulling fishing nets and untangling them underwater; sorting, picking, cleaning, smoking, transporting, and selling fish; cleaning and repairing nets; and building and repairing boats (3-5,9-13)
	Quarrying† and small-scale mining,† sometimes for gold, including the use of mercury,† digging in deep pits, crushing rocks by hand, carrying heavy loads,† and operating machinery† (5,7,9,11)
	Textiles, Manufacturing† (7,8)
	Construction and carrying heavy loads (3,7-9)

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

Sector/Industry	Activity
Services	Domestic work (4,5,9)
	Transporting heavy loads as <i>kayayei</i> † (5,9,14,15)
	Work in transportation† (8)
	Street work,† including begging, (5,7,9)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,5,9,16-18)
	Forced labor in begging; agriculture, including cocoa; herding; fishing; artisanal gold mining; domestic work; and street work, including vending and carrying heavy loads (3,5,9,17-21)
	Forced ritual servitude for girls known as <i>trokosi</i> , including in domestic work for priests (16,19)

† 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.

NORC at the University of Chicago released a report detailing findings from a sectoral representative survey conducted in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire during the cocoa harvesting season of 2018–2019. This report found an increase in child labor (and hazardous child labor) in cocoa production during the 10-year timeframe since the survey in 2008–2009. (6) A majority of children who are subjected to human trafficking in Ghana are exploited for labor in cocoa production, domestic work, commercial sexual exploitation, gold mining, and fishing. Children as young as age 4 are subjected to forced labor in fishing in the areas around Lake Volta, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. (5,6,9,19,20,22) In addition, girls as young as age 13 from rural northern regions in Ghana travel to urban centers to work as *kayayei*, or female porters, carrying heavy loads on their heads in markets, and are particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation. (5,9,14,15)

According to the Constitution and the Education Act, primary education in Ghana is free from kindergarten through high school, though only compulsory through junior high school, and a birth certificate is not needed for enrollment. (9,23,24) The dual-track system, introduced in 2018, allows secondary school students to attend school in alternating semesters and take advantage of opportunities such as vocational training when they are not in school. (14,25) Although this has significantly increased the overall number of children attending school, reports suggest that opportunities to attend vocational training are often not readily available or affordable. As a result, these children are vulnerable to exploitation in child labor during the times when they are not in school. (2,3,11,16,17,26) In addition, factors such as a shortage of classrooms, administrative fees, expenses for school supplies and uniforms, long distances to schools, the absence of sanitation facilities, overcrowding in urban areas, sexual harassment of girls in schools, physical violence and verbal abuse in schools, and poor educational infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, severely limit access to education for many children. (2,3,5,9,11,19)

## II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Ghana has ratified most 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 Ghana's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the lack of commercial sexual exploitation prohibitions for live performances.

**Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor**

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Section 89 and 92 of the Children's Act (27)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Section 91 and 92 of the Children's Act (27)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 28.1d, 28.2, and 28.5 of the Constitution; Article 7 of the Labor Regulations Legislative Instrument; Sections 91 and 92 of the Children's Act; Article 58 of the Labor Act (23,27-30)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 16.1 and 16.2 of the Constitution; Articles 116 and 117 of the Labor Act; Sections 1–3 and 42 of the Human Trafficking Act; Sections 1 and 2 of the Human Trafficking Prohibition Legislative Instrument (23,28,31,32)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Sections 1 and 2 of the Human Trafficking Act; Sections 1 and 2 of the Human Trafficking Prohibition Legislative Instrument; Articles 21–25 of the Labor Regulations Legislative Instrument (29,31,32)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Sections 101A, 107, 108, 110, 111, 274–277, and 279–283 of the Criminal Offenses Act; Article 7(2) of the Labor Regulations Legislative Instrument; Section 136 of the Electronic Transaction Act; Section 62-66 of the Cybersecurity Act. (29,33-35)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Ghana Armed Forces General Eligibility (Recruits) (36)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes*		Ghana Armed Forces General Eligibility (Recruits) (36)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15‡	Article 2.2 of the Education Act (37)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 25.1.a of the Constitution; Articles 1.1, 1.2, and 2.2 of the Education Act (23,37)

\* Country has no conscription (36)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (37)

While Ghana does criminally prohibit the use, procuring, and offering of a child for electronic pornographic performances, the law does not extend to live pornographic performances. In addition, although Ghana has prohibited some hazardous work for children, the current hazardous work list does not cover all occupations or activities in which child labor is known to occur, including in cocoa production. (3,29,38,39) Furthermore, Ghana has not established a law that prohibits the use of children for illicit activities.

### III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

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

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations (MELR)	Enforces child labor laws. (14) Conducts national dialogue and a workshop on Child Labor-Free Zones to discuss child labor in the cocoa industry. (3)
Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development's District Assemblies	Through labor inspectors, investigates child labor violations, educates employers on compliance with child labor laws, and conducts inspections. (3,9,38) Through social services subcommittees, enforces child labor provisions in the informal sector. (3,27)

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**Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement (Cont.)**

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of the Interior	Through its Ghana Police Service, investigates, arrests, and prosecutes cases related to the worst forms of child labor, and operates a 24/7 hotline for reporting crimes. (3,9) Within the Ghana Police Service, the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit and Anti-Human Trafficking Unit investigate cases and provide support to survivors. (3,40) Through its Ghana Immigration Service, combats human trafficking through Anti-Human Smuggling and Trafficking Units. (3)

### Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Ghana took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the authority of the Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient resource allocation.

**Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor**

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (5)	Unknown (9)
Number of Labor Inspectors	48 (5)	189 (9)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	No (28)	No (28)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (5)	Yes (9)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	749 (5)	1,108 (9)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (5)	46 (9)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A (5)	14 (9)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A (5)	0 (9)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (5)	Yes (9)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (5)	Yes (9)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (28)	Yes (28)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (5)	Yes (9)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (5)	Yes (9)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (5)	Yes (9)

While the labor inspectorate is unable to assess fines for child labor violations, they are able to refer violations to the Ghana Police Services who can issue them for violations. (9,28) Research indicates that Ghana does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. (3,5,24,41) Additionally, research also found that inadequate resources, including funding, transportation, office space, and office supplies hamper the labor inspectorate's capacity to enforce child labor laws, particularly in the informal sector in which child labor is most common. (3,4,38) In addition, a formal referral mechanism continued to be hindered by the lack of funding, shelter space, and transportation for survivors. (3,4)

### Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Ghana took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of criminal law enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient allocation of financial resources.

**Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor**

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (5)	Yes (9)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (5)	46 (9)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	16 (5)	14 (9)
Number of Convictions	3 (5)	13 (9)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (5)	Yes (9)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (5)	Yes (9)

During the reporting period, the government organized 6 consultative stakeholder meetings to review and develop the new national plan of action on the worst forms of child labor; developed a communications strategy for the years 2022–2026 on human trafficking issues; and organized 5 capacity building trainings for over 300 government officials on irregular human trafficking migration patterns, definitions of forced and child labor, and capacity training which supported survivors of human trafficking. (42) However, criminal enforcement agencies lack the resources to properly monitor sectors in which the worst forms of child labor are known to occur. (5,6,9,17,19,43)

The Office of the Attorney General is responsible for prosecuting child trafficking violations. However, there was an insufficient number of state attorneys designated to prosecute human trafficking crimes. A majority of cases were handled by the Ghana Police Service's police prosecutors, whose lack of advanced legal training may impede their ability to prosecute complex criminal cases. (24,44,45) Research also indicates that slow communication and challenges in evidence collection between the Ghana Police Service and the Attorney General's office may have further hampered efforts to prosecute cases of child trafficking. (3) The IOM has also developed a Trafficking in Persons Information System to improve case tracking. While several ministries, including the Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations; the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection; the Ministry of Justice; and the Ministry of the Interior have committed to using this system, research shows that there was limited use of the Trafficking in Persons Information System during the reporting period. (3)

#### IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

**Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor**

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Steering Committee on Child Labor	Coordinates government efforts to address the worst forms of child labor, and oversees implementation of the National Plan of Action Phase II on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor, which includes implementation of the Ghana Child Labor Monitoring System. (3,46) Led by MELR's Child Labor Unit, includes representatives from other ministries, employers' and workers' organizations, and civil society. (3,46,47) During the reporting period, the committee met on a regular basis and continued anti-trafficking prevention efforts. (9)

The Inter-Sectoral Standard Operating Procedure for child protection and family welfare provides a harmonized framework of agreed standards, principles, and procedures for all child protection and family welfare stakeholders to understand each other's roles and responsibilities. Under the supervision of the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection, it identifies specific procedures for the use of forms, tools, and guides by social services and other key stakeholders, and it holds stakeholders accountable to each other. (4,5)

During the reporting period, the government improved its data sharing efforts with NGOs and other countries by providing child labor figures, specifically those related to freshwater fishing. The information provided informed NGOs of how to better implement their programs. (9)

#### 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 the lack of a policy to address all worst forms of child labor.

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**Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor**

Policy	Description & Activities
2010 Declaration of Joint Action to Support the Implementation of the Harkin-Engel Protocol and Its Accompanying Framework of Action	Joint Declaration by the Governments of Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, and the United States with the International Cocoa and Chocolate Industry. (50,51) Provides resources and coordinates with key stakeholders on efforts to reduce the worst forms of child labor in cocoa-producing areas. (50,51) Ensures that all project efforts implemented under the Declaration and Accompanying Framework align with Ghana's national action plans to promote coherence and sustainability. (50,51) This strategy includes the Cocoa for Good Strategy, a \$500 million investment to make cocoa in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire more sustainable and transparent. In 2022, Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, along with EU stakeholders, supported the Alliance on Sustainable Cocoa, which works to improve the economic, social, and environmental sustainability of cocoa production and trade, including by addressing child labor. (52,53)

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (40,55)

Two new national action plans to address child labor and human trafficking were developed during the reporting period but have yet to be finalized. (9) As a result, Ghana lacks a policy to address all worst forms of child labor. In addition, research was unable to determine whether the Hazardous Child Labor Activity Framework and the Hazardous Child Labor Activity Framework for the Cocoa Sector, which was developed in consultation with workers' and employers' organizations to identify hazardous activities that should be prohibited for children, was implemented during the reporting period. (30,39) Moreover, although the government made strides in the implementation of its National Plan of Action for the Elimination of Human Trafficking in Ghana, research indicates that the government relied heavily on NGOs to implement the mandates of this policy. (17)

## VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, 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 inadequate funding and the inadequacy of programs to address the problem in all sectors.

**Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor**

Program	Description & Activities
Industry-Funded Projects	Projects that aim to increase sustainability in the cocoa sector; improve farmer livelihoods, improve access to education, and address the worst forms of child labor in cocoa-growing areas. Some projects may be in support of the World Cocoa Foundation's CocoaAction (2014–2020) initiative and the spirit of the 2010 Declaration. (56)
Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection (MOGCSP) Programs†	Programs that aim to support vulnerable children. Includes: the Program to Assist <i>Kayayei</i> , which provides rehabilitation and reintegration support; the temporary program "Get Off the Street," which aims to remove children from the street and reintegrate them into family and educational settings; the Human Trafficking Fund, which aims to provide financial support to victims; and the conditional cash transfer program, which aims to provide monetary support to poor households with orphans and vulnerable children on the condition that these children attend school. (57-59) During the reporting period, MOGCSP continued their advocacy efforts through TV and radio campaigns on topics related to child labor and human trafficking. (42)
Educational Programs‡	Ministry of Education-funded programs under the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education aim to increase school attendance and enrollment. MOGCSP's Ghana School Feeding Program aims to reduce malnutrition, and improve attendance among students; its Capitation Grant Scheme helps defray the cost of basic education for students in public primary schools; and its Ghana Education Service—Girls' Education Unit places girls' education officers at the regional and district levels, and mobilizes communities to enroll more girls in school. (58,60) During the reporting period, the Ghana School Feeding Program fed 3,448,065 pupils in 10,832 public schools. (61)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† Program is funded by the Government of Ghana.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (45)

Although the government worked closely with industry, NGOs, and international organizations to implement child labor programs in cocoa production, fishing, and mining, the breadth of these programs remains insufficient to address the full scope of the problem. (5) Research indicates a lack of funding as one of the primary obstacles in implementing programs to address child labor. (3,5,57) In addition, shelters are needed in additional regions and districts for survivors of the worst forms of child labor, as well as more funding and logistics support for rescue operations and survivor protection. (3,17,19,24)

## 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 Ghana (Table 11).

**Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor**

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Accede to the UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.	2013 – 2022
	Ensure that laws criminally prohibit all forms of commercial sexual exploitation of children, including the use of children in live performances.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that laws criminally prohibit the use of children in all illicit activities, including for the production and trafficking of drugs.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2015 – 2022
	Update the hazardous work list for children to cover all hazardous types of work outlined in ILO C. 182.	2020 – 2022
Enforcement	Publish information on the amount of funding allocated to the labor inspectorate.	2009 – 2022
	Significantly increase the number of labor inspectors from 189 to 969 to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force.	2010 – 2022
	Strengthen and fully fund the mechanism to track cases of child labor for referral between law enforcement and social services providers.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that labor inspectors and criminal investigators have adequate resources, including office space, transportation, and supplies, to adequately carry out their mandates throughout the country.	2009 – 2022
	Ensure that prosecutors who have received sufficient legal training oversee and lead the prosecution of cases involving the worst forms of child labor; that an adequate number of state attorneys are available to prosecute cases, and that these cases are prosecuted according to the law.	2015 – 2022
	Improve communication and coordination among criminal enforcement agencies to prosecute cases of the worst forms of child labor and provide adequate victim support.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that the Trafficking in Persons Information System is used and publish any related activities.	2020 – 2022
	Ensure that criminal enforcement agencies have the resources to properly monitor sectors in which the worst forms of child labor are known to occur.	2021 – 2022
Coordination	Ensure that all coordinating bodies are active and able to carry out their intended mandates.	2013 – 2022
Government Policies	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement government policies and that data on these activities are published on an annual basis related to child labor.	2013 – 2022
	Finalize National Action Plans to address child labor and human trafficking.	2022
	Provide necessary resources for the government to implement the mandates of its national policy.	2022
Social Programs	Improve access to education by eliminating school-related fees, increasing the number of classrooms, improving access to schools, providing sanitation facilities, and prohibiting sexual harassment and physical violence in schools.	2010 – 2022
	Ensure that opportunities such as vocational training are available to secondary school students enrolled in the dual-track system.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that social programs are active and receive sufficient funding to carry out their objectives.	2014 – 2022
	Expand the availability of government-supported shelter services for child survivors and ensure that all shelters are operational.	2016 – 2022
	Replicate and expand effective models for addressing exploitative child labor in the cocoa, fishing, and mining sectors.	2009 – 2022

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