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2020 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor: Cameroon

Moderate Advancement

In 2020, Cameroon made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government ratified the UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography. Cameroonian police also arrested members of an international trafficking network that operated in Cameroon, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, and Chad. In addition, the Forever Chocolate program, which provides school kits and livelihood support to families as a means to combat child labor in the production of cocoa, was expanded to Nkondjock, Sangmelima, Mbalmayo, and Ayos. However, children in Cameroon are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in cocoa production. In addition, the government has not prohibited the use of children in illicit activities, including in the production and trafficking of drugs, and it has not prohibited the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups. Furthermore, labor inspectors do not regularly conduct inspections in the informal sector, in which the majority of child labor occurs.

I. Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of Child Labor

Children in Cameroon are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in cocoa production. (1-3) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Cameroon. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	43.7 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	80.0
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	42.4
Primary Completion Rate (%)		65.5

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2019, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2021. (4)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 5 (MICS 5), 2014. (5)

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

Sector/Industry Activity

Agriculture	Production of bananas, cocoa, palm oil, onions, and tea, including handling pesticides, using machetes, clearing fields, climbing trees, and lifting heavy loads† (6-9)
	Raising livestock (7-10)
	Fishing (7-11)

Industry	Working in artisanal gold mines† and gravel quarries,† transporting heavy loads† of sand or gravel, breaking stones, and digging or standing in stagnant water to extract minerals (3,7-9,12-15)
	Construction, including carrying heavy loads† of water, concrete, cement, and bricks (8,9)
Services	Domestic work (6-10)
	Working in restaurants and as phone booth operators (6-10)
	Working in transportation (6-10)
	Street work, including carrying heavy luggage and selling bush meat,† vending, and begging (6-10,16)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,6-9,14,15)
	Recruitment of children by <i>Boko Haram</i> , a non-state armed group, for use in armed conflict, including as suicide bombers and concubines and recruitment of children by community watch groups for strategic operations. In addition, Anglophone separatists recruited and used child soldiers in the Southwest and Northwest Regions, both for fighting government forces and for gathering intelligence, according to observers. (8,9,17)
	Forced labor in agriculture in the production of cocoa, cotton, onions, and tea; fishing; livestock raising; domestic work; spare parts shops; in artisanal gold mines and gravel quarries; street vending; and construction, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,7-9,14,15,18)
	Forced begging as <i>talibés</i> in Koranic schools (3,8,9,14,15)

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

† 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.

Cameroon is a source, transit, and destination country for child trafficking from neighboring countries in Central and West Africa. (3,15,19) Due to increased awareness among parents of the risks associated with entrusting children to intermediaries who often promise to take children to urban centers to pursue education or an improved living arrangement, some perpetrators of human trafficking have resorted to kidnapping children. (3,9,15) An ongoing crisis in the Anglophone regions has contributed to a dramatic increase in underage prostitution, especially in areas with significant numbers of IDPs. (8)

The crisis in the Anglophone Northwest and Southwest Regions that began in 2016 as mass protests by lawyers and teachers has since evolved into an armed separatist conflict with more than 3,000 persons killed, more than 44,000 refugees, and more than 500,000 IDPs. Armed separatist groups have called for and violently enforced boycotts of schools in the Northwest and Southwest Regions leading to long-term disruptions of education for children. (6,9,20,21) Separatists frequently attacked and kidnapped students and teachers who attended classes, often releasing them only after collecting ransoms or incorporating them into their ranks to fight against government forces. On October 24, 2020, alleged separatists killed at least seven children attending classes at Mother Francisca International Bilingual Academy in Kumba, Southwest Region. (9,22) UNICEF stated in a September report that only 1,600 out of a total of 6,400 public schools were functional in the Anglophone regions. On October 8, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported that only 19 percent of the 70,000 elementary school students in the Northwest Region, and 27 percent of 151,000 students in the Southwest Region were attending school due to fears of separatist reprisals. (9,23) Children in refugee or IDP camps are particularly vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation, and may have a more difficult time accessing education due to a lack of school infrastructure, including potable water and sanitation facilities, teachers, and resources to pay for school-related expenses. (10,24)

In the Far North Region, terrorist activity by Boko Haram and ISIS-West Africa have also disrupted children's schooling. The disruption of children's access to education places children at high risk of becoming victims of exploitation and child labor. (9,25,26) In 2020, in the Far North Region, Boko Haram, which our report identifies as a non-state armed group, recruited and used 71 children in their operations including at least 2 children as suicide bombers. Of these 71 children, 49 were abducted. (9,17) Boko Haram also continues to forcibly recruit Cameroonian children as porters, cooks, and scouts. Boko Haram also used girls as forced suicide bombers and sex slaves and boys as child soldiers. (8,9,17) Some community neighborhood watch groups, known as Vigilance Committees, may have also coerced and recruited children as young as age 12 to serve as scouts against Boko Haram, although there is no evidence that suggests government sponsorship of such activities. (8,9)

The government requires children to have identification documents, including birth certificates, to fully access education. The Ministry of Basic Education identified 1,785,668 of the 4,942,000 primary students registered for the 2020–2021 academic year as not having birth certificates. (9) While there are no reports suggesting the authorities prevented access to education for children, those without birth certificates often found it difficult to register for end-of-course examinations to enter secondary school, which sometimes led students to drop out of school and, therefore, put them at a greater risk for being subjected to child labor. (9)

II. Legal Framework for Child Labor

Cameroon has ratified most key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

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	✓

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

In January 2020, the Government of Cameroon ratified the UN Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography that Cameroon signed in October 2001. (9)

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Cameroon's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the prohibition of using children in illicit activities and the establishment of a compulsory education age that is consistent with the minimum age for work.

Standard	Meets International Age Standards	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	14 Article 2 of Order N° 017 on Child Labor; Section 86 of the Labor Code (27,28)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18 Articles 9–23 of Order N° 017 on Child Labor; Section 86 of the Labor Code (27,28)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes	Articles 9–23 of Order N° 017 on Child Labor (28)

Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Sections 2–6 of the Law Relating to the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons and Slavery; Articles 11, 342-1 and 352-353 of the Penal Code; and Section 2 of the Labor Code (27,29,30)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	No		Sections 2 and 4–6 of the Law Relating to the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons and Slavery; Articles 11, 342-1 and 352–354 of the Penal Code (29,30)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 294 and 344–347 of the Penal Code; Articles 76 and 81–82 of the Law on Cybersecurity and Cybercriminality (29,31)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 12 of the Decree Concerning the Status of Non-Defense Military Personnel; Article 2a of the Decree Establishing the Conditions for Admission to Military Training Schools for Officers (32,33)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by Military (State)	Yes*		Article 12 of the Decree Concerning the Status of Non-Defense Military Personnel; Article 2a of the Decree Establishing the Conditions for Admission to Military Training Schools for Officers (32,33)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	No	12‡	Preamble of the Constitution; Articles 9 and 16 of the Law Orienting the Education System (34,35)
Free Public Education	No		Articles 46 (2), 47, and 48 of the Decree on the Organization of Public Schools (36)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

* No conscription (37)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (38)

Children in Cameroon are only required to attend 6 years of primary school, which typically concludes at age 12; this standard makes most children ages 13 through 14 vulnerable to child labor as they are not required to attend school but are not legally permitted to work. In addition, there is no free basic education for children in Cameroon as established by law, increasing the risk of children's involvement in child labor. (32,33) Human trafficking provisions do not meet international standards, as they require threats, the use of force, or coercion to be established for the crime of child trafficking, and individuals ages 16 to 18 are not considered children. (29,30) In addition, the types of hazardous work prohibited for children under age 18 are not comprehensive, as work at dangerous heights is not prohibited. (28,39)

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.

Organization/Agency Role

Ministry of Labor and Social Security (MINTSS)	Leads efforts to enforce all labor laws, including those related to child labor, promotes decent working conditions, and leads the National Committee to Combat Child Labor (CNLCTE) and the labor inspectorate. (11,40)
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Ministry of Justice (MOJ)	Prosecutes cases referred by the General Delegate for National Security (DGSN) or the Ministry of Defense's National Gendarmerie (SED), and contributes to investigations, as appropriate. (41)
General Delegate for National Security (DGSN)	Enforces laws against the worst forms of child labor and investigates violations in urban areas. (41) Through its Special Vice Squad, investigates cases of human trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and other forms of abuse against women and children. (39,41) Refers cases to MOJ or the Ministry of Defense for investigation by SED. (42)
Ministry of Defense's National Gendarmerie (SED)	Investigates cases of child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation in both urban and rural areas before referring cases to MOJ for prosecution. (42) Operates two toll-free numbers, 1501 and 113, for the reporting of human rights abuses, including trafficking in persons. (43)

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Although it does not play a direct role in enforcement, Cameroon's National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms advises government ministries on the enforcement of laws related to child labor and advocates for sanctions as appropriate. (10,44) Local representatives from the Ministry of Territorial Administration may settle child labor disputes or refer the case to the Ministry of Defense's National Gendarmerie, the General Delegate for National Security (DGSN), or the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) for further investigation and prosecution. (42) Article 109 of the Labor Code authorizes inspectors to take direct legal action before the court against people infringing on the provisions of the labor law. (8)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2020, labor law enforcement agencies in Cameroon took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor and Social Security (MINLSS) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including financial resource allocation.

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2019	2020
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$1.2 Million (8)	Unknown (9)
Number of Labor Inspectors	300 (8)	300 (9)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Yes (8)	Yes (9)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Yes (8)	Yes (9)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A (8)	N/A (9)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (8)	Unknown (9)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	6,100† (8)	3,591 (9)
Number Conducted at Worksite	6,100† (8)	3,591 (9)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (8)	Unknown (9)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A (8)	Unknown (9)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A (8)	Unknown (9)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (8)	Yes (9)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (8)	Yes (9)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (8)	Yes (9)

Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (8)	Yes (9)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (8)	Yes (9)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (8)	Yes (9)

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

† Data are from January 1, 2019 to October 31, 2019. (8)

The government did not provide certain information related to labor law enforcement efforts, including labor inspectorate funding and number of child labor violations found. According to the ILO's technical advice of 1 inspector for every 15,000 workers in industrializing economies, Cameroon should employ about 660 labor inspectors but currently employs only 300. (9,37,40,41,45,46) Furthermore, inspectors are tasked with conciliation duties that may detract from time devoted to their primary duties; and labor inspectors do not regularly conduct inspections in the informal sector in which the majority of child labor occur. (8,9,27,47-49) In the formal sector, inspectors in the East Region Delegate of Social Affairs found that 605 children were subjected to child labor in 29 mining sites in the region. In general, the labor inspectorate lacked resources during the reporting period, and field inspectors, in particular, lacked transportation. (8,9)

Although the government has not created a formal mechanism for filing and responding to complaints about child labor, victims and their relatives can report directly to any of the institutions, including the Ministry of Social Affairs (MINAS), MINLSS, State Defense Secretariat, or MOJ. (6,9)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2020, criminal law enforcement agencies in Cameroon 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 allocating financial resources.

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2019	2020
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Yes (8)	Yes (9)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A (8)	N/A (9)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (8)	Yes (9)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (8)	Unknown (9)
Number of Violations Found	Unknown (8)	Unknown (9)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (8)	Unknown (9)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (8)	Unknown (9)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to The Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (8)	Unknown (9)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (8)	Yes (9)

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

The government does not publicly release information on its criminal law enforcement efforts. Criminal law enforcement agencies do not receive adequate funding or training to investigate the worst forms of child labor, and high staff turnover is a challenge. (3,6,9,10) Despite credible reports that children were involved in child labor, the government did not report that it investigated any child labor cases, and MINLSS officials stated that there were no reported cases of violations of laws related to child labor. Consequently, no new prosecutions were brought to trial during the reporting period. (9)

In a letter to the Secretary General of the Prime Minister’s Office, the Head of the National Police, stated that the police had investigated six human trafficking cases and referred the traffickers to competent courts for judicial action. (9) In another letter to the Secretary General of the Prime Minister's Office, the Secretary of State for Defense in Charge of the National Gendarmerie, stated that the Gendarmerie investigated 199 human trafficking cases and referred them to the competent courts as of the end of August. Details on the ages of the victims, however, were not provided. (9) Research did not uncover information about any individuals involved in ongoing prosecutions that began in previous reporting periods and no data were available for the reporting period on numbers of violations, prosecutions initiated, convictions, or penalties in Cameroon. (9)

MINAS, the International Criminal Police Organization, and DGSN all maintain hotlines for reporting the worst forms of child labor. Calls are routed to the National Referral System for assistance to victims. (9,12,18,24,39,50) However, the system has not been well publicized since it was established in 2013, leaving the public unaware of its existence, and some calls may go unanswered. (24,51) Research was unable to determine how many cases of child labor were identified because of complaints made to these hotlines.

During the reporting period, Cameroonian Police arrested members of a human trafficking network which bought and sold newborn babies in the capital of Yaoundé. The trafficking network operations are believed to expand beyond Cameroon and include Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, and Chad. (52) Because of these instances of human trafficking, border police continued efforts to ensure that children do not cross borders without being accompanied by a parent. Adults accompanying children must show proof of their relationship with the child by presenting the child's identification documents. (7,53) The government continues to acknowledge that a lack of awareness of child trafficking issues may prevent citizens from reporting offenses to enforcement agencies and that children may be afraid to speak against perpetrators in court. (3) While there have been past reports that indicate the government has held children as young as age 5 in detention facilities for prolonged periods due to suspicion of being affiliated with Boko Haram, or to prevent them from being recruited into Boko Haram, there were no reports during the reporting period that the government detained or punished any children found engaged in child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation, illegal or illicit activities, or armed conflict. (9,44,54-59)

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 the lack of resources to carry out mandates.

Coordinating Role & Description
Body

National Committee to Combat Child Labor (CNLCTE)	Coordinates government efforts to combat child labor and proposes measures to harmonize Cameroon’s legal framework to international standards. Implements the National Plan of Action to Combat Child Labor and Trafficking in Children that expired during the reporting period. (37,60,61) Led by MINLSS, includes representatives from 10 other ministries and government bodies. (40,60) In March 2020, members attended a 2 day capacity building workshop in Ebolowa, South Region, organized by MINLSS and ILO, during which they explored the different forms of child labor, assessed actions implemented in the fight against child labor since 2014, and analyzed priority actions moving forward. (9)
Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) on Trafficking in Persons	Coordinates government efforts to combat human trafficking. Chaired by the Secretary General of the Office of the Prime Minister, includes members of eight ministries, law enforcement personnel, civil society organizations, and NGOs. (3,24) Oversees Regional Taskforces on Trafficking in Persons in Northwest, Southwest, and Littoral Provinces. (3,62) Held two formal sessions and two workshops for staff dedicated to anti-trafficking efforts during the reporting period. (63)

Coordinates efforts to combat human trafficking. Provides social services through its National Referral System. (10,11,43,64) Through its Minors Brigade, supports local police in their investigations of child trafficking and the use of children in hazardous work. Uses other programs to help identify, reintegrate, and educate street children. (43,44) In the first quarter of 2020, MINAS removed 381 human trafficking victims including 304 children from their situation of exploitation and Social Affairs provided them assistance in MINAS-run centers nation-wide. In addition, between (MINAS) April 1 and June 30, MINAS removed 162 children from the streets of Yaoundé as part of a pilot operation dubbed “Monitoring and Observation of Street Children.” (9) On June 29, MINAS placed 40 of the children at the Betamba Childhood Institute at which they learn trades, returned 78 children to their families, placed 27 in MINAS-run centers, while the remaining few had to be released from the program due to their age. (9)

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

A lack of resources and socio-political unrest in the Anglophone regions hampered government efforts to effectively coordinate to combat the worst forms of child labor. (9,16)

In June 2020, the Government of Cameroon created a new National Committee to Combat Child Labor to replace the one that existed before. The new committee was created to enhance effectiveness and efficacy in the fight against child labor. (9)

Research indicates that the National Committee to Combat Child Labor had not made significant progress because of a lack of resources. There is also evidence to suggest that each of the government agencies represented in the committee looked for its own funding and initiated its own activities without significant coordination. (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 implementation.

Policy	Description
Decent Work Country Program (2014–2020)	Incorporated child labor concerns into the national strategy for work. (67) Research was unable to determine whether actions were undertaken by the committee during the reporting period. (9)

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (9,14)

In 2020, the government joined the Alliance 8.7 program, an inclusive global partnership committed to achieving Target 8.7 of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. Target 8.7 seeks, among other objectives, to secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labor. (9,68)

The government has not included child labor elimination and prevention strategies into the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (2010–2020) or the Inter-Ministerial Committee's National Gender Policy Document (2011–2020). (69–71)

VI. Social Programs to Address Child Labor

In 2020, the government funded and participated in programs that may contribute to preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including adequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem.

Program	Description
Project to Fight the Phenomenon of Street Children (Project 559)†	In conjunction with the National Employment Fund, this MINAS-funded program provides street children with health care, education, and psychosocial care, and supports the reintegration of street children by providing vocational training opportunities. (10,38,72) In 2020, the project provided support to 40 children at the Betamba Childhood Institute in the Center Region that serves as a rehabilitation center for adolescents and placed them in apprenticeships programs including carpentry, masonry, welding, and auto mechanics to prepare them to eventually return to their families and reintegrate into society. (9)

Support Project in Quality Management for Cocoa and Coffee Production/Forever Chocolate (2019–2025)*†	Promotes labor standards in the cocoa industry, including the fight against child labor in conjunction with environmental protection. Identifies children in cocoa farming and those who are at risk of joining cocoa farms, and facilitates their return to school. (8) Implemented by NGO association <i>Enfant Jeunesse Avenir</i>, in partnership with Cameroon Cacao Industrial Corporation, Cameroon's biggest cocoa processor. Government ministries, including the Ministry of Health, MINAS, the Ministry of Women Empowerment and the Family, MINLSS, and the Ministry of Basic Education, are key stakeholders in the program. (8) The project is implemented in cocoa production basins using the Farmer Field School Extension Approach and is aimed at training cocoa farmers to produce cocoa free of child labor using environmentally friendly techniques. (8) The government also established a National Cocoa Academy led by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. The training institute is deployed in production basins with a view to popularizing good agricultural practices, including the prohibition of child labor on plantations. (8) In 2020, in addition to the four districts of Ntui, Bangassina, and Monatele (Center Region), and Tonga (West Region) where the program was initially implemented, Forever Chocolate was extended to include Nkondjock (Littoral Region), Sangmelima (South Region), Mbalmayo, and Ayos (Center Region). The program, which supported children with school kits, sought to empower women and provide families with alternative sources of income to limit the involvement of children in child labor. (9)
Cameroon Institute of Childhood Rehabilitation Project (2017–2020)†	\$2.9 million project that was financed by MINAS and its partners to rehabilitate a center in Betamba, which serves children in conflict with the law and provides vocational training to area youth. (10) Between April 1 and June 30, MINAS removed 162 homeless children from the streets of Yaoundé as part of a pilot operation called “Monitoring and Evaluating of Street Children.” On June 29, MINAS placed 40 of those children at the Betamba Childhood Institute where they are sheltered, learning trades, and receiving psychosocial support. (63)
United States Government Programs (non-DOL)	\$27 million U.S. Department of Agriculture funded McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program, which improves literacy and nutrition in 265 primary schools. During the reporting period, in collaboration with the Ministry of Basic Education, it organized three workshops in the Adamawa, East, and North Regions to train 140 head teachers on school management. (9) In July 2020, they recognized 148 teachers from 148 primary schools selected by the Ministry of Basic Education in the East, Adamawa, and North Regions in recognition for outstanding services as part of a strategy to encourage teachers to meet the learning needs of children and ensure that students remain in school. The program also drilled 10 boreholes in 10 schools in the 3 regions and provided daily meals to 84,000 pupils, which encouraged children from poor communities to regularly attend classes. (9) Continued its activities from previous years of constructing classrooms, modern school toilets, kitchens, and food stores in addition to establishing school gardens, providing stationery to needy children and teachers, and supported the efficient management of school resources to deliver quality education. (9)
UNICEF Projects	Includes UNICEF Country Program (2018–2020), which prioritized strengthening the child protection system to prevent violence and exploitation, especially sexual violence against girls. Provided financial and technical support to the government for the implementation of an inclusive birth registration project, with a particular focus on indigenous communities. (6) Services for Displaced or Refugee Children is another UNICEF-funded program that provided educational services to children affected by conflict, including: CARED2, which offered accelerated education curriculums for children in refugee camps in the Far North; ETAPES, which established temporary schools and protection centers in Adamawa and East regions; and the Child Protection and Education Project, which worked with Catholic Relief Services in the East to enroll and retain refugee children in schools. (6,8,73)

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

† Program is funded by the Government of Cameroon.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (3,9,15)

Although the government has implemented programs to assist victims of child trafficking and children engaged in street work and domestic work, the scope of these programs is insufficient and does not fully address the extent of the problem in other sectors such as agriculture, mining, quarrying, and commercial sexual exploitation nor does it address the structural issues found within the school system. (1,6,9,74) Government-run centers can temporarily house victims, but space is limited. (24,75,76)

Some victims of child labor, as well as vulnerable children, were removed from their situation of exploitation and referred to social services. Research found NGOs removed child labor victims from their situation of exploitation and provided shelter and other temporary forms of assistance. (9) These include the Network for Human Rights Defenders in Central Africa, which provided housing and temporary assistance; Kumba-based Survival Network provided shelter and scholarships to two victims; and Justice and Peace Commission of the Bamenda Catholic archdiocese in the Northwest Region assisted IDPs associated with the Anglophone crisis; however, these organizations did not share an exact number of participants. (9)

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 Cameroon (Table 11).

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested	
Legal Framework	Ensure that laws prohibiting child trafficking do not require threats, the use of force, or coercion to be considered child trafficking, and that all children under age 18 are protected.	2015 2020	-
	Criminally prohibit the use of children for illicit activities, including in the production and trafficking of drugs.	2014 2020	-
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 2020	-
	Establish a minimum age for compulsory education that is consistent with the minimum age for admission to work.	2009 2020	-
	Ensure that the hazardous occupations and activities prohibited for children are comprehensive and include work at dangerous heights.	2014 2020	-
	Establish by law free basic public education.	2019 2020	-
Enforcement	Collect and publish comprehensive statistics on enforcement efforts including labor inspectorate funding, number of child labor violations found, the number of criminal labor law violations found, the number of investigations, the number of prosecutions, and the number of convictions.	2009 2020	-
	Increase the number of labor inspectors to meet the ILO's technical advice.	2009 2020	-
	Ensure that the labor inspectorate and criminal law enforcement agencies receive an adequate amount of funding, training, and resources with which to conduct inspections and investigations.	2009 2020	-
	Strengthen the labor inspectorate by conducting inspections in all sectors, including the informal sector.	2013 2020	-
	Ensure that all hotlines for reporting the worst forms of child labor are well publicized and operational, and that all calls are logged so that cases of child labor may be tracked for referral to law enforcement or social services providers.	2015 2020	-
	Raise awareness of child trafficking issues to encourage citizens to report offenses to enforcement agencies, and ensure that such cases are resolved within the judicial system.	2016 2020	-

Coordination	Ensure that existing coordinating mechanisms function effectively and receive sufficient resources to carry out their stated mandates.	2014 2020	-
	Ensure that all of the Community Coordination Teams are active and undertaking activities in support of their missions.	2020	
Government Policies	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper and the Inter-Ministerial Committee's National Gender Policy Document.	2010 2020	-
	Ensure all actions plans are active and being implemented according to their mandate.	2020	
Social Programs	Ensure that the number of schools, teachers, potable water, and sanitation facilities are adequate throughout the country.	2009 2020	-
	Ensure that social programs to address child labor are implemented in accordance with their mandates.	2018 2020	-
	Make additional efforts to provide all children with birth documentation.	2020	
	Ensure that all children, regardless of refugee status, have access to education by eliminating school-related fees, and minimizing the disruption of the classroom. Ensure that schools are free from violence and not re-appropriated for other purposes.	2009 2020	-
	Expand existing programs to address the scope of the child labor problem in Cameroon, and institute programs to address child labor in agriculture, mining, quarrying, and commercial sexual exploitation.	2009 2020	-
	Ensure that all government-run centers have sufficient space to accommodate victims of child trafficking and children engaged in street work and domestic work.	2016 2020	-

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

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