

USDOL – US Department of Labor

2020 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor: Philippines

Moderate Advancement

In 2020, the Philippines made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment a U.S. citizen for "large-scale qualified trafficking in persons," making it the first online sexual exploitation of children conviction of a foreigner in the country and enabling the largest seizure of digital evidence to date. The government also established the Philippine National Multi-Sectoral Strategic Plan on Children in Street Situations to address the needs of street children. In addition, the House of Representatives passed House Bill No. 7836, which will raise the age of sexual consent from age 12 up to age 16, while eliminating a provision in the Penal Code that protected rapists from penalty if they proposed marriage to their victims. However, children in the Philippines are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and in armed conflict. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture and gold mining. Although the government made meaningful efforts in all relevant areas during the reporting period, it did not adequately protect children allegedly engaged in drug trafficking from inappropriate incarceration or physical harm during detention. The government also did not ensure that children released from custody were placed in accredited rehabilitation centers. In addition, the government failed to take law enforcement action against officials who facilitated the production of fraudulent identity documents or were otherwise complicit in human trafficking. Moreover, the enforcement of child labor laws remained challenging throughout the country, especially due to the low number of inspectors, lack of resources for inspections, and inspectors' inability to assess penalties.

I. Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of Child Labor

Children in the Philippines are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and in armed conflict. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture and gold mining. (1-3) The Survey on Children indicated that 2.1 million children ages 5 to 17 engage in child labor, of whom approximately 2 million engage in hazardous work. (4-6) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in the Philippines.

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	2.0 (466,708)
Working children by sector	5 to 14	
Agriculture		44.9
Industry		5.5
Services		49.6
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	95.5
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	2.1
Primary Completion Rate (%)		105.8

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2019, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2021. (7)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Labour Force Survey (LFS), 2019. (8)

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 sugarcane,† including growing, weeding, † harvesting, † cutting, † and carrying sugarcane bundles† (2,3,9)
	Growing bananas, coconuts, corn, rice, rubber, and tobacco (2,3,12,13)
	Deep-sea fishing† (2,3,15)
Industry	Mining† and quarrying,† including for gold (2,3,15,16)
	Manufacturing pyrotechnics† (2,3,15)
	Construction,† activities unknown (2,3)

	Production of fashion accessories (2,3)
Services	Domestic work (2,3,19,20)
	Street work, including scavenging, selling flowers, and begging (2,3,5,21)
	Scavenging in dumpsites† and in rivers (15)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, including use in the production of pornography, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (2,3,5,22-25)
	Forced labor, including domestic work, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,25,27)
	Recruitment of children by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict (2,3,28,29)
	Forced begging (2,3,5,30)
	Use in illicit activities, including in the distribution, procurement, and sale of drugs, including methamphetamine (<i>shabu</i>) (2,3,30-32)

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.

Children, primarily girls, from rural communities are subjected to trafficking domestically in urban centers and tourist destinations for the purposes of domestic work and commercial sexual exploitation. (22,23,25,27,33) While evidence indicates that the availability of child sex trafficking victims in commercial establishments declined in some urban areas, child sex trafficking remains a pervasive problem, typically abetted by taxi drivers who have knowledge of clandestine locations. (33) Traffickers also lure children from remote areas on Mindanao and other regions by using tourist visas available in Middle East countries, where many Filipinos work in household service jobs, and then sell the children to employment sponsors who exploit them. (27,33-35) Traffickers are able to circumvent the Philippine Government and destination countries' regulatory frameworks for foreign workers and evade detection by using student and intern exchange programs and fake childcare positions. In addition, traffickers take advantage of porous maritime borders to avoid detection. (33)

Research indicates that the Philippines remains one of the top global Internet sources of online sexual exploitation of children (OSEC), which continues to be a highly profitable and growing sector due to increased access to Internet connectivity. A study found that OSEC cases tripled—reflecting a 250 percent increase—from 2014–2017. (20,25,27,33-44) In cases of OSEC, children are induced to perform sex acts at the direction of paying foreigners and local Filipinos for live Internet broadcasts that usually take place in small Internet cafes, private homes, or windowless dungeon-like buildings commonly known as “cybersex dens.” (3,20,25,27,33,38-40,44) Increasingly, women have been found to be perpetuating OSEC crimes, motivated by mostly financial incentives, with data indicating that upwards of 87 percent of OSEC cases involve a female trafficker known to the victims, most commonly the mother. (27,37,38)

According to data from March 1–May 24, 2020, the Philippines Department of Justice's Office of Cybercrimes received 279,166 reported cases of OSEC from the U.S. National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, which is a significant (264 percent) increase from the 76,651 reported OSEC cases from the same timeframe in 2019. There were 36 confirmed cases of OSEC in 2020. (45) Recent surveys indicated an increase in the number of unconfirmed OSEC cases during the reporting period, fueled in large part by movement restrictions, and children having access to the Internet while being at home with their abusers during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. (5,27,36,38,41,43,46) A report released in 2020 concluded that the Philippines had become a global hub for OSEC due to high international and domestic demand, vulnerabilities in the financial system, and gaps in existing legislation. (27,47) In response to the increase in reported OSEC cases during the reporting period, the government filed House Resolution No. 1336 (H.R. No. 1336) which, when passed, will require the House Committee on the Welfare of Children and all other applicable committees in the House of Representatives to research the prevalence of OSEC cases reported during the pandemic. (42)

Recruitment of child soldiers by non-government militias and terrorist organizations, predominately on the southern island of Mindanao, remains a concern. (2,3,5,25,28,29,33,44,48) Research also suggests that these non-state armed groups, including the New People's Army, the Abu Sayyaf Group, and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters continue to recruit children—sometimes by force—from schools for use in combat and non-combat roles, including as human shields, cooks, and fighters, while offering religious education and material incentives to join. (2,3,20,25,27,33,44,48) In addition, the Islamic State reportedly subjects women and girls to sexual slavery. (33) The Government of the Philippines continued to convene formal coordination meetings with the UN on incidents of grave violations against children to facilitate appropriate responses to such situations. (3,25,49)

According to results from a 2020 survey on child labor, children were found to work on sugarcane plantations and rice fields in Luzon; as vendors, tricycle drivers, and carwash crew in Cavite; as plastic and paper scraps scavengers in Caloocan City; and as factory workers for slipper production in Laguna. Children from areas impacted by Typhoon Haiyan in Visayas in 2013 were reportedly forced to work as domestic helpers and as “traffic enforcers” to aid in high-construction areas post-typhoon, while children from indigenous communities in Mindanao worked on corn plantations. (5,50) Furthermore, a survey conducted by the Philippine Statistic Authority, in conjunction with the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), found that over 50,000 out of 1.4 million domestic workers were minors and 4,900 were under the age of 15. It also reported that 95 percent of all child laborers were found to be engaging in conditions of hazardous work. (5,19) The Philippine Statistics Authority included a child labor module in the October 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020 rounds of the Labor Force Survey, but the results have yet to be released. (5)

Although the Constitution establishes free, compulsory education through age 18, unofficial school-related fees, such as for school uniforms, are prohibitive for some families. Other barriers to education include substandard infrastructure which makes traveling and access to schools challenging, especially for children in rural areas, and architectural barriers that pose challenges for children with disabilities. (44) The most recent Functional Literacy, Education and Mass Media Survey, published in 2015 with 2013 data, indicated that 10.6 percent of all school-age children did not attend school. (2,5) The more recent Annual Poverty Indicator Survey, published in 2018 with 2017 data, estimated that of the 44 million school-age children (ages 3 to 19), one-third were not enrolled in or attending school, with the highest percentage of those children living in the newly formed Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). In an effort to combat this and to help facilitate youth school attendance, BARMM authorities provided the Ministry of Basic, Higher, and Technical Education the largest share of its budget for calendar year 2020. (3,5,44,51)

II. Legal Framework for Child Labor

The Philippines has ratified all 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

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in the Philippines' legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including having the compulsory education age below the minimum age for work.

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Article 137 of the Labor Code as renumbered; Section 12 of the Special Protection of Children Against Child Abuse, Exploitation, and Discrimination Act; Section 16 of the Act Instituting Policies for the Protection and Welfare of Domestic Workers (52-54)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 137 of the Labor Code as renumbered; Section 12-D of the Special Protection of Children Against Child Abuse, Exploitation, and Discrimination Act (53-55)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Department Order 149 and 149A on Guidelines in Assessing and Determining Hazardous Work in the Employment of Persons Below 18 Years of Age; Sections 12-D and 14 of the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation, and Discrimination Act (2,54-57)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Sections 4 and 5 of the Expanded Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act; Sections 12-D and 16 of the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation, and Discrimination Act (55,58)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Sections 3(a), 4(k), 5, and 10 of the Expanded Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act; Sections 12-D and 16 of the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation, and Discrimination Act (55,58)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Section 11 of the Free Internet Access in Public Places Act; Sections 12-D and 16 of the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation, and Discrimination Act; Section 4 of the Anti-Child Pornography Act; Section 4 of the Cybercrime Prevention Act (55,59-61)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Sections 12-D and 16 of the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation, and Discrimination Act; Sections 5 and 8 of the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act (55,62)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Section 12 of the Providing for the Development, Administration, Organization, Training and Maintenance and Utilization of the Citizen Armed Forces of the Philippines, and for Other Purposes Act (63)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes*		Section 14 of the Providing for the Development, Administration, Organization, Training and Maintenance and Utilization of the Citizen Armed Forces of the Philippines, and for Other Purposes Act (63)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Sections 12-D and 16 of the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation, and Discrimination Act (55)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	18‡	Section 4 of the Enhanced Basic Education Act (64)
Free Public Education	Yes		Section 2 of the Philippine Constitution (65)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

* No conscription (63)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (64)

For a third year, the Government of the Philippines reportedly continued reviewing proposed amendments to R.A. No. 9231 that would: (a) increase the minimum age of employment from age 15 to age 16, (b) devolve the issuance of child work permits to local government units, (c) institute stricter working hours for children, (d) mandate that part of the money legally earned by children be set

aside in a trust fund, (e) authorize DOLE to determine the types of non-hazardous agricultural employment or work that children ages 16 to 18 can perform, and (f) design a holistic intervention program for children working in the informal economy. It is unclear what progress was made in 2020 toward passing these amendments. (2,3,5)

During the reporting period, the government filed several House and Senate Bills dealing with the worst forms of child labor. These included: House Bill No. 6015, which aims to provide stiffer penalties for violations of Republic Act No. 9231 by imposing both imprisonment and a fine for every instance a child is engaged in employment other than what is stated in the law; House Bill No. 6923, which seeks to prevent, respond to, and end OSEC, and will create an inter-agency council on OSEC that will serve as a monitoring body on initiatives related to the crime; House Bill No. 7465 which will amend the term "child pornography" to "sexual abuse or exploitation of children;" Senate Bill No. 1929, which aims to recognize and include online and digital platforms as methods used to commit trafficking in persons, and further expands the definition of trafficking in persons crimes to include OSEC; and House Bill No. 7836, which will raise the age of sexual consent from age 12 up to age 16, and eliminate a provision in the Penal Code that protected rapists if they proposed marriage to their victim. (5,66-68)

In response to continued reports of recruitment and use of child soldiers by non-state armed groups in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, the government passed legislation and issued regulations to ensure special protection for children in situations of armed conflict, mandated rehabilitation and services, and prescribed punishments. (33)

As the minimum age for work is lower than the compulsory education age, children may be encouraged to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. (44)

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 enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Organization/Agency Role

Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE): Bureau of Working Conditions (BWC) and Bureau of Workers with Special Concerns (BWSC)	BWC enforces child labor and child trafficking laws and regularly trains inspectors and regional personnel. (2,5,23,25,27,69) Inspects establishments and monitors compliance with labor laws in the formal sector. (69) Manages DOLE enforcement activities registered by DOLE regional offices in the Labor Inspection Management Information System. (45) Oversees the 1349 hotline as a platform for reporting child labor-related complaints. (5) During the reporting period, closed three establishments in which investigations led to the identification of child sex trafficking victims. (5,33) Created a Systems Development Team to streamline its programs and services in relation to enforcement and monitoring of labor standards. Developed an Establishment Report System to provide access for establishments to comply with documentation requirements safely from home, as mandated by the Labor Code. (5,70,71) In addition, from January–October, issued 1,473 work permits to children under the age of 15 per Republic Act No. 9231. (5) BWSC oversees the Profiling Child Laborers Initiative. (3,72) Mandated to develop policies, programs, and systems that champion the development and protection of disadvantaged workers, by contributing to their decent and productive employment. Provides advisory and technical assistance to the Labor Secretary and Regional Offices. (73) During the reporting period, BWSC continued to profile child laborers nationwide (excluding the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao). From January–December, 11,083 children were profiled prior to the suspension of activities in March; 64,739 were referred for the provision of necessary services; 40,860 were provided with necessary services; and 51,671 were removed from child labor. (5)
Rescue the Child Laborers Quick Action Teams (Sagip Batang Manggagawa)	Detects, monitors, and rescues child laborers in hazardous, exploitative, or extremely abject working conditions. (2,3,5,30,74,75) An inter-agency, quick reaction mechanism that is chaired by DOLE-BWSC. (5) During the reporting period, led 7 rescue operations and removed 12 child laborers from child labor. (27) Signed a Memorandum of Agreement with respective national government agencies to define and coordinate specific roles for each agency. (5)
Criminal Law Enforcement Agencies: Philippine National Police (PNP), National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA)	Philippine National Police (PNP) investigate and prosecute cases related to the worst forms of child labor. (5) In the case of the Women and Children's Protection Center (WCPC), enforces laws on child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children, and has 269 personnel nationwide. (27) During the reporting period, created <i>Aleng Pulis</i> (Miss Police) to allow the public to contact for information and assistance related to trafficking in persons. (27) National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) investigates and prosecutes child labor cases and operates a national Task Force on the Protection of Women Against Exploitation and Abuse and a Task Force on the Protection of Children from Exploitation and Abuse. (2,27) Oversees the Anti-Human Trafficking Division, which investigates trafficking and illegal recruitment nationwide. (25) Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) enforces the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act, maintains a national hotline for reporting cases of children used in illicit activities, and coordinates with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) to assist during rescue operations. (2,5)

National Telecommunications Commission enforces the Anti-Child Pornography Law. Coordinates with Internet Service Providers to block websites containing pornographic material involving children. (59,76) Department of Justice—Office of Cybercrime receives CyberTips reports from the U.S.-based National Center for Missing and Exploited Children regarding potential online sexual exploitation of children (OSEC) cases, conducts initial investigation into CyberTips, prioritizes cases, then sends cases to the PNP's Internet Crime Against Children Center for follow up. (77) Comprises legal and investigative divisions. (77) Philippine Internet Crimes Against Children Center (PICACC) aims to combat the online sexual exploitation of children. Comprises the PNP-WCPC Anti-Human Trafficking Division and NBI Anti-Human Trafficking Division, and aims to coordinate WCPC and NBI investigation of Internet crimes against children. (27,49,78) Coordinates international investigations with the United Kingdom's National Crimes Agency (UK NCA) and the Australian Federal Police (AFP). (24,25,41,78-82) Receives funding from the UK NCA, AFP, and the U.S. Government. (80,81) During the reporting period, in conjunction with the PNP-WCPC and the NBI Anti Human Trafficking Division, partnered with foreign law enforcement agencies and an NGO to improve the effectiveness of investigations of OSEC. PNP-WCPC also launched a hotline and text line for reporting and routing of OSEC cases to proper authorities. (27,33) Department of Information and Communication Technology—Cybersecurity Bureau provides preventative technological assistance to law enforcement and protects (PICACC),* Dept. of cybersecurity of Filipino citizens. (83) Oversees an anti-OSEC program comprising awareness-raising programs, computer software, website monitoring, cybersecurity, and a visible Internet application, a form of artificial intelligence that allows for remote screen access. Shows an educational anti-OSEC video for communities, in collaboration with the Philippines Online Corporation. (83) Coordinates efforts with the Inter-Agency Council Against Child Pornography and consults with telecommunications companies and civil society organizations to produce the National Cybersecurity Strategy. (61,83,84) Oversees, CyberSafePH, an awareness campaign and capacity-building program with a 3-year roadmap aimed at combating OSEC and cyberbullying. (25,33,85) During the reporting period, hosted webinars on OSEC and cyberbullying, developed a short-film entitled "Manila," and created a Cyber Chat Session Ender "#WeACTAsONE." (85) The launch of an online hotline to report OSEC cases in collaboration with the National Computer Emergency Response Team remained pending in 2020. (86)

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

* Agency responsible for child labor enforcement was created during the reporting period.

DOLE's Department Order No. 216 (D.O. No. 216) requires private employment agencies, when applying for a license to operate, to provide a notarized Affidavit of Undertaking stating that the agency will not engage, tolerate, nor support any acts involving illegal recruitment, trafficking in persons, violation of anti-child labor laws, or crimes involving moral turpitude or other similar activities. DOLE also issued Department Order No. 217, which has the same prerequisites as D.O. No. 216, but is focused on domestic workers. (5)

In addition, the government passed three Labor Advisories to ensure that children were protected from the worst forms of child labor during the pandemic. They included: Labor Advisory No. 23, which allows a child under the age of 15 to participate in public entertainment and information programming provided the child works from home under the supervision of a parent or guardian; Labor Advisory No. 24 (L.A. No. 24), which allows a child between the ages of 15–18 to participate in public entertainment or information programming provided that the child works from home under the supervision of a parent or guardian; and Labor Advisory No. 24-A (L.A. No. 24-A), which replaced L.A. No. 24 and allows a child between the ages of 15-18 to participate on-camera, in studio, or on location shots for public entertainment and information programming, provided that the official minimum public health standards are strictly implemented. Furthermore, L.A. No. 24-A also provides the child the right to refuse work. (5)

During the reporting period, the Department of Justice implemented a pilot initiative with the aim of introducing measures and policies to address human trafficking in public procurement and supply chains. In October, the program held its first webinar introducing several anti-human trafficking initiatives in public procurement policy and supply chain management. The webinar also introduced government officials to modern slavery concepts and how government procurement policies can be used to combat human trafficking. (27)

A lack of resources, including staff and a centralized database for tracking illegal recruitment and human trafficking, is an area of concern within law enforcement agencies because it impedes their ability to act quickly upon complaints of child labor, including OSEC, in both investigations and prosecutions. (25,33)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2020, labor law enforcement agencies in the Philippines took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the authority of DOLE that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including the authority to assess penalties.

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2019	2020
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$2,771,987 (45)	\$4,240,743 (45)
Number of Labor Inspectors	710 (3)	710 (5)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	No (53)	No (53)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Yes (3)	Yes (5)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	Yes (3)	Yes (5)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (3)	Yes (5)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	70,298 (86)	13,974 (5)
Number Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (3)	13,974 (5)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (3)	4 (5)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (3)	4 (5)

Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (3)	Unknown (5)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (3)	Yes (5)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (3)	Yes (5)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (3)	Yes (53)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (3)	Yes (5)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (3)	Yes (5)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (3)	Yes (5)

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

During the reporting period, DOLE used technology for contactless inspection and continued implementing its strategy under DOLE's Department Order 183-17 (D.O. No. 183-17), which prioritizes the following establishments and workplaces for inspection: (a) those engaged in hazardous work; (b) those employing children; (c) those engaged in contracting or subcontracting agreements; (d) those employing 10 or more employees; (e) other establishments or industries determined by the DOLE Secretary for priority inspection. DOLE also added additional sectors slated for regular labor inspections, including: (a) companies employing foreign nationals—Philippine Offshore Gaming Operations, in particular; (b) ongoing construction projects; and (c) companies engaged in contracting and subcontracting such as security agencies. (5) Labor inspections were suspended from March 15 to May 31, 2020, due to the pandemic, but inspections arising from essential service complaints continued during this time. (5) This brief moratorium on labor inspections resulted in a significant decrease in the total number of inspections conducted in 2020, compared to 2019. (5)

Also during the reporting period, the Bureau of Working Conditions (BWC) received a budget of \$1.7 million specifically allocated for expenses related to labor law enforcement activities, including labor inspector training. An additional \$4.1 million was allocated to the BWC regional offices for administrative expenses, including for labor inspector travel and transportation costs, trainings, supplies and materials, and cellular data plan subscriptions, and does not include the budget for the salaries of the labor inspectors working outside of the National Capital Region. (5) Despite these allocations, enforcement of child labor laws remained challenging due to the lack of resources for inspections and the limited number of inspectors, especially in rural areas where many vendors are unregistered and highly mobile. (2,3,15,30) The BWC also acknowledged that more specialized training on child labor is needed to enhance labor inspectors' ability to readily identify and act on child labor situations. (3,5)

The number of labor inspectors is likely insufficient for the size of the Philippines's workforce, which includes approximately 42 million workers. According to the ILO's technical advice of a ratio approaching 1 inspector for every 15,000 workers in developing economies, the Philippines would employ about 2,852 labor inspectors. (2,87,88)

During the reporting period, the Bangsamoro autonomous government provided \$400 for rehabilitation support to the families of 180 children found to have been involved in child labor in the agricultural sector. (5,89)

Scheduling routine inspections is based on the national target set by the DOLE Central Office. Regional offices implement inspections based on factors such as prevailing industries and geographical areas. (2,3,72) Despite this, enforcement of child labor protections is not sufficient for children employed in the informal sector and in small and medium-size enterprises, particularly in agriculture and fishing, due to DOLE's lack of capacity and resources. (2,3,5,27,44,90) The Rescue the Child Laborers Quick Action Teams are permitted to conduct unannounced compliance visits to video karaoke bars, massage parlors, sauna and bathhouses, and farms, but they are not authorized to conduct visits to private homes to search for underage child domestic workers. However, there are mechanisms available to *barangay* (village level) officials to permit them to investigate domestic work-related complaints. (2,3,5)

The government did not provide information on its labor law enforcement efforts relating to the number of child labor violations for which penalties imposed were collected.

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2020, criminal law enforcement agencies in the Philippines took actions to combat child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Philippine National Police (PNP) 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 (3)	Yes (5)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (3)	Yes (5)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (3)	Yes (5)
Number of Investigations	116 (3)	41 (5)
Number of Violations Found	305 (3)	87 (5)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	54 (3)	70 (5)
Number of Convictions	34 (3)	55 (5)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (3)	Yes (5)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (3)	Yes (5)

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

During the reporting period, the government continued its anti-drug campaign, which began in 2016, and did not adequately protect children allegedly engaged in drug trafficking from inappropriate incarceration or physical harm. Between January and September 2020, 553 children between the ages of 4–17 were arrested and detained during anti-drug operations nationwide. (5,91,92) PNP reported its referral of these children to the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), after which they were placed in either juvenile detention centers or "Houses of Hope," which, in practice, closely resemble detention centers. (2,32,44)

Children also continued to be victims of extrajudicial killings during operations carried out as part of the anti-drug campaign. According to a children's rights NGO, 12 children were victims of extrajudicial killings during law enforcement operations between January and October 2020. (5) A report released in June posited that the total number of children killed since the beginning of anti-drug operations is likely under-reported. (93-97) In addition, there were reports of collateral deaths of children caught in the crossfire during police operations connected to the drug war, with some high-level government officials suggesting that killing suspected drug traffickers and users was necessary to wipe out drug-related crime, increasing the vulnerability of children being used in the drug trade. (3,93,98-100) There is no evidence that the government investigated, prosecuted, or convicted police officers accused of killing children during anti-drug operations in 2020. (44,48,93-96,101)

During the reporting period, law enforcement officials conducted 176 coordinated anti-trafficking operations involving 237 minor victims, which led to the prosecution of 172 defendants charged with the trafficking of children, and 81 defendants convicted for offenses related to the worst forms of child labor, including OSEC. (85) From April 2020 to March 2021, the government also convicted 34 traffickers under the anti-trafficking act and related laws, resulting in the courts sentencing 16 traffickers to sentences of life imprisonment, and assessed fines ranging from \$80,000 to \$100,000. The courts convicted a further 20 suspects of OSEC-related crimes. (27) In one notable case, the government convicted U.S. citizen David Timothy Deakin to life imprisonment and a \$40,000 fine for "large-scale qualified trafficking in persons," making this case the very first OSEC conviction of a foreigner in the country. Criminal law enforcement also seized the largest amount of digital evidence related to OSEC in the Philippines to date. (5,27)

During the reporting period, the government failed to take law enforcement action against officials who facilitated the production of fraudulent identity documents or were otherwise complicit in human trafficking. (27,33)

During the reporting period, the Supreme Court issued "Guidelines on the Conduct of Videoconferencing," which permitted OSEC cases to use Video-In-Depth-Interview kits which, as a result, helped to protect 109 OSEC victims from appearing in court; thus helping to prevent re-traumatization of victims. (25,27,33,49,85) In addition, the Department of Justice issued its first advisory on plea bargaining in human trafficking cases, and the increased use by courts of such pleas—particularly in OSEC cases—significantly decreased the time to case resolution, further reducing the potential for re-traumatizing child victims. (33,85)

Philippine law allows judges to award civil compensation to human trafficking victims from damages arising from being trafficked, but victims rarely receive this restitution since perpetrators often lack sufficient assets to pay. However, in cases for which perpetrators are financially able to pay this penalty, many are able to evade doing so due to ineffective, slow court procedures. (27)

Research indicated the need for more law enforcement personnel, funds for operations, and equipment for forensic analysis of digital evidence due to the high volume of cybercrime tips related to child sexual exploitation received by the Office of Cybercrime each month. (33,44) Slow-moving courts, the need for additional training on handling digital evidence, lack of understanding regarding legal framework, and too few prosecutors also hindered the effective and timely prosecution of human trafficking crimes. (20,27,33,35)

IV. Coordination of Government Efforts on Child Labor

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Council Against Child Labor (NCACL)	Formerly the National Child Labor Committee and reorganized after the signing of E.O. No. 92 in 2019. Chaired by DOLE and co-chaired by DSWD. (3,5,25,27,102-105) Expanded membership to include seven other government agencies, two members from the employers sector, two members from the workers sector, and two NGOs with programming on child labor. (3,5,27,103) New members will be nominated and serve a three-year term. (3) Coordinates national efforts to combat child labor and implements the Philippine Program Against Child Labor. (2,75,105,106) Promotes information sharing at the national, regional, and provincial levels, and is tasked with establishing and disseminating a child labor reporting mechanism for use by local and national authorities. (3,25) Held its first meeting in January 2020 and assigned chairs and co-chairs of their technical working groups, which met multiple times throughout the year. (3,5) Stated it plans to restructure its subcommittees in 2021 and potentially change committee leadership assignments. (5)
Anti-Trafficking: Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT), Task Force Against Illegal Recruitment, Recruitment of Minor Workers, and Trafficking in Persons, and #SaferKidsPH	IACAT oversees the 1343 Actionline emergency hotline for trafficking in persons victims. (23,107) Coordinates, monitors, and oversees efforts to combat human trafficking, including child trafficking. Chaired by the Department of Justice and co-chaired by DSWD. (2,5,23,25,27,33,49,107) Composed of 11 government agencies and 3 NGOs. (25,27) Comprises 24 anti-human trafficking task forces, including 16 regional task forces and 8 inter-agency task forces in major seaports and airports. (15,49) During the reporting period, received a budget of \$2.03 million in 2020. (27) The Department of Justice approved a 59 percent increase in the number of prosecutors assigned to anti-trafficking task forces. Established the Task Force Against the Trafficking of Overseas Filipino Workers to coordinate investigative and protective followup on trafficking cases referred by the Department of Foreign Affairs overseas missions. (27,33,85) Initiated a technical working group to create "Guidelines on the Investigation and Monitoring of Trafficking in Persons-Related Corruption Cases," to ensure a zero-tolerance policy on trafficking-related malfeasance in government. (27) Increased number of staff from 116 to 142 and conducted 25 rescue operations involving 212 minors. (27) Provided 82 anti-trafficking capacity building trainings to 3,245 law enforcement officials, including topics on investigation and prosecution of cases involving forced labor and OSEC, and trauma-informed care for survivors. (45,85) Implemented new prosecutor's human trafficking case management system to monitor case progress and outcomes. (33) Convened six meetings, including a stakeholder symposia focused on discussion of progress in addressing human trafficking issues including OSEC, and held three virtual focus group discussions with human trafficking survivors during the reporting period. (27,33) The Task Force Against Illegal Recruitment, Recruitment of Minor Workers, and Trafficking in Persons addresses illegal recruitment, recruitment of minor workers, and trafficking in persons. Coordinates all DOLE programs and initiatives and is chaired by DOLE. Mechanism was active during the reporting period. (2) #SaferKidsPH was established in 2019, in collaboration with the Government of Australia, UNICEF, Save the Children Philippines, and the Asia Foundation. 6-year campaign aims to strengthen investigation and prosecution of OSEC cases in the country, promote safe online habits for children through awareness campaigns, and improve service delivery for OSEC survivors. (3) Led by the Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT) in conjunction with DSWD, the Department of Information and Communication Technology, and the Department of Education, #SaferKidsPH partners with government agencies, educational institutions, private companies, and local community members, including parents and children to combat OSEC. Mechanism was active during the reporting period. (3)

Inter-Agency Council Against Child Pornography	Serves as the primary government coordinating mechanism to address child pornography. (2,3,5) Monitors and implements the Anti-Child Pornography Act (R.A. No. 9775). (3) Comprises 12 government agencies and 3 NGOs. (106) Chaired by DSWD. (108) Research was unable to determine whether this coordinating body was during the reporting period.
Children Involved in Conflict: Inter-Agency Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC) and Inter-Agency Committee on Children in Situations of Armed Conflict (IAC-CSAC)	CWC initiates, promotes, and advocates policies and measures protecting children's rights. (2,3,5) Operates and maintains the Protocol on Monitoring, Reporting, and Response System for reporting incidents of children in armed conflict, including monitoring the six grave child rights violations. (25,27,109) Held a virtual ceremony in September recognizing the 2019 signing of the Children in Situations of Armed Conflict Handling Protocol. (5) In addition, signed a Memorandum of Agreement with ABS-CBN Lingkod Kapamilya Foundation recognizing <i>Bantay Bata</i> 163 as dedicated hotline for reporting child rights violations; violations received through <i>Bantay Bata</i> 163 will be referred to appropriate agencies for immediate assistance and intervention. (5) Issued Joint Memorandum Circular 2020-001 that served as a reminder to local government units to recognize and promote the rights and best interests of children during quarantine and curfew hours. (5)
Juvenile Justice and Welfare Council	IAC-CSAC advocates protecting children and preventing the involvement of children in armed conflict. Chaired by the CWC. (20,25,27) Coordinates and monitors the implementation of the Children in Armed Conflict Program Framework. (49,110) Convenes quarterly. Ensures that international instruments, including the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, are referenced in discussions. (110) Formulates guidelines and develops programs in coordination with concerned agencies for the handling of children involved in armed conflict, and monitors or documents cases of capture, surrender, arrest, rescue, or recovery by government forces. Works closely with applicable agencies in coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the enhanced CSAC program framework. (20,110) Conducts human rights training, advocacy and information campaigns, and capacity building of local government units. Implements a monitoring, reporting, and response system for grave child rights' violations in situations of armed conflict. (110) During the reporting period, developed guidelines in handling children involved in armed conflict in order to provide protection through the proper handling and management of cases. (85)
Juvenile Justice and Welfare Council	Leads community outreach and education efforts, through offices located throughout the country, to prevent the use of children in illicit activities, including in drug trafficking. Manages livelihood, rehabilitation, food, and scholarship programming. (32) Overseen by DSWD. (44,111) During the reporting period, assisted IAC-CSAC on the conceptualization and finalization of guidelines for handling children involved in armed conflict. (85)

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

During the reporting period, the Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT), in partnership with the international nonprofit organization International Justice Mission (IJM) and the USDOS Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons Office, hosted a 3-day summit to discuss the growing concern of OSEC in the Philippines. (27,112,113) Attendees discussed best practices in investigative and judicial procedures among other topics and IJM announced the launch of its Center to End Online Sexual Exploitation of Children that will seek to strengthen the global response to this crime. (112-114)

In addition, in September, the Government of the Philippines virtually hosted the ASEAN Twentieth Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime. A major outcome of the meeting included key agreements among ASEAN member states on how they will continue to respond to transnational crimes in the region, with each member state enumerating their respective plans for the succeeding years. (27)

The government also held a Bilateral Meeting on Transnational Investigative Cooperation on Trafficking in Persons in July 2020 with the Government of Malaysia. In addition, the Government of the Philippines shared best practices on prosecuting human trafficking cases—specifically OSEC—with 40 members of Thailand's law enforcement agencies, government agencies, and NGOs at an event hosted by the Thailand Trafficking In Persons Network. (27)

V. Government Policies on Child Labor

The government has established policies that are consistent with relevant international standards on child labor (Table 9).

Policy	Description
Philippine Program Against Child Labor Strategic Framework (2020-2022)*	Aims to gradually reduce child labor through consultations with government institutions, local and international NGOs, civil society organizations, faith-based groups, professional associations, academia, the private sector, parents, and children. (2,5,115) Implementation led by DOLE's BWSC. (86,116) During the reporting period, conducted a mid-term assessment and held a planning workshop in which the Philippines Program Against Child Labor Strategic Framework, the Philippine Program Against Child Labor Strategic Plan, and the technical working groups of the NACL were improved upon. (5)
Anti-Trafficking Policies: National Strategic Action Plan Against Trafficking in Persons (Third StratPlan)	National Strategic Action Plan Against Trafficking in Persons (Third StratPlan) aims to address labor trafficking and sex trafficking, including OSEC. (117) Chaired by the Secretary of the Department of Justice and co-chaired by the Secretary of the Department of Social Welfare and Development. Employs a multi-stakeholder approach to fight human trafficking. (118) Mandated to prevent and suppress human trafficking, and ensure victim recovery, rehabilitation, and reintegration into society via four key result areas: 1. Prevention and Advocacy; 2. Protection, Recovery, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration; 3. Prosecution and Law Enforcement; and 4. Partnership and Networking. (118) In 2020, Third StratPlan was implemented and there were several meetings to update the plan. (45) Child Protection Compact Partnership, a plan jointly developed with USDOS, seeks to increase prevention efforts and protections for child victims of OSEC and labor trafficking, while holding perpetrators accountable. (20,38,107,119) Aims to improve the response to child trafficking, including live-streaming online of child sexual exploitation and child trafficking for labor purposes, by (1) increasing criminal investigations, prosecutions, and convictions; (2) strengthening the government's and civil society's capacities to identify and provide comprehensive services for victims; and (3) strengthening existing community-based mechanisms that identify and protect victims of child trafficking. (107,120,121) The government committed approximately \$800,000 for its implementation. (119,122) This policy was implemented during the reporting period. (5)
Philippine Development Plan (2017-2022)*	Aims to build the socioeconomic resilience of individuals and families by reducing their vulnerability to various risks and disasters; this includes the goal of universal social protection for all Filipinos. (1,6) Aims to achieve a zero number of child laborers by 2022. (5,106) This policy was implemented during the reporting period. (5)

National Plans: National Strategic Framework for Plan Development for Children (Child 21) (2000–2025), 3rd National Plan of Action for Children (2017–2022), and the Philippine National Multi-Sectoral Strategic Plan on Children in Street Situations*	Child 21 sets out broad goals for national government agencies, local governments, and NGOs to achieve improved quality of life for Filipino children by 2025. (123) Addresses concerns related to the worst forms of child labor under the section on children in need of special protection. (15) Chaired by the Council for the Welfare of Children. (2) Policy was implemented during the reporting period. (5) 3rd National Plan of Action for Children (NPAC) strengthens strategies, policies, and programs for children to achieve Child 21's vision for Filipino children by 2025. (2,49,123,124) In 2020, conducted a mid-term review on the NPAC to assess progress on reaching agency targets and recommended measures to take to achieve the goals of the NPAC. (45) Philippine National Multi-Sectoral Strategic Plan on Children in Street Situations was established in 2020. Addresses the needs and concerns of street children using a child rights approach, and strengthens multi-sectoral cooperation among stakeholders. (5)
Philippine Plan of Action to End Violence Against Children (2017–2022)	Multi-sectoral plan to gradually reduce violence against children through consultations with government institutions, local and international NGOs, civil society organizations, faith-based groups, professional associations, academia, the private sector, and parents and children. Consistent with Child 21 and the National Plan of Action for Children visions. (3,125) Research was unable to determine activities undertaken to implement this policy during the reporting period.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

* Policy was implemented during the reporting period.

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (57,126,127)

During the reporting period, the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) signed a 1-year memorandum of agreement with local NGO, Blas Ople Policy Center, to establish a BARMM anti-human trafficking task force. (27)

VI. Social Programs to Address Child Labor

In 2020, 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 the provision of adequate services for victims of child pornography.

Program	Description
Anti-Child Labor Programs: Child Labor Prevention and Elimination Program †, Livelihood for Parents of Child Laborers (Kabuhayan para sa Magulang ng Manggagawa)†, and Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (Conditional Cash Transfer Program)	Child Labor Prevention and Elimination Program is a DOLE anti-child labor program that implements local awareness-raising campaigns, institutes child labor-monitoring mechanisms, and requires neighborhoods to develop child labor elimination plans. (2) Includes a provision of livelihood assistance to parents of child laborers, <i>Sagip Batang Manggagawa</i> , and Project Angel Tree. (2,107) During the reporting period, partnered with an NGO to lobby for an increased budget, and used social media and information, education, and communication materials (IEC) to strengthen its child labor awareness campaign. (5) During World Day Against Child Labor, disseminated IEC materials on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on child labor, and information on <i>Talakayang Pambata</i> ("Discussion for Children"), a live educational discussion about child labor. (5) Project Angel Tree is a social service program †, with local government agency benefactors, known as "angels," who provide educational supplies to communities. (72,128) From January–October, conducted 27 gift-giving activities to 2,943 child laborers and children at risk. Gifts distributed included school supplies, food packs, toiletries, and other items donated by civic organizations and private institutions. (5) Livelihood for Parents of Child Laborers is a DOLE program that provides livelihood assistance to parents, guardians, or other family members of child laborers. Seeks to prevent and eliminate child labor by providing necessary materials to start a livelihood undertaking. (80) From January–October, provided livelihood assistance to 2,770 parents of child laborers, in the form of <i>Negokart</i> (business carts), starter kits, and other materials needed to start a livelihood. In October, launched the <i>Free Bisikletang Panghanapbuhay</i> ("Free Bike for Livelihood" or <i>FreeBis</i>) Project. <i>FreeBis</i> is overseen by the Integrated Livelihood Program and aims to help ease unemployment during the pandemic. (5) During the reporting period, distributed 890 bicycles to recipients, including 88 parents of child laborers. Each bicycle came with a helmet, raincoat, water bottle, thermal bag, and an Android mobile phone with \$100 worth of service for electronic payment application. (5) Conditional Cash Transfer Program is a DSWD national poverty reduction program that provides conditional grants, local awareness-raising campaigns, and child labor-monitoring mechanisms to assist poor families with children's access to health care, adequate nutrition, and education. (2,3,27,129) Includes a child labor module within the sessions on family development for program participants. (2,30,130) Covers 1,627 cities and municipalities in 79 provinces in all 17 regions. (2,3) During the reporting period, raised awareness on child labor and combatted societal acceptance and tolerance of child labor through trainings. (27)
Strategic Helpdesks for Information, Education, Livelihood and Other Developmental Interventions (SHIELD) for Child Laborers†	DSWD-led project implemented in 13 <i>barangays</i> in Catanduanes, Labo, Jose Panganiban, Paracale, Kananga, and Ormoc City, with support from the ILO CARING Gold Mining Project. Currently in a 2-year pilot, with official plans to launch nationwide in 2021. (45,72) Comprises three components: Child Labor Local Registry; Helpdesk and Convergence of Services; and Advocacy, Organizing, and Capacity Building. (2,130) Focuses on areas with a high child labor incidence rate, with interventions based on data from the Child Labor Local Registry. (130) Focused particularly on eliminating the worst forms of child labor in the small-scale gold mining, deep sea fishing, and sugarcane industries. (2,3,75,131) During the reporting period, compiled profiles of child laborers in 15 <i>barangays</i> that will be used by the Philippine Statistical Development Program (2018–2023). (3,5,40)

Anti-Trafficking Programs: Recovery and Reintegration Program for Trafficked Persons (RRPTP) † and Strengthening Local Systems and Partnerships for More Effective and Sustainable Counter-Trafficking in Persons in the Philippines (Strength CTIP), 2019–2022	RRPTP is a DSWD and IACAT program that provides recovery and reintegration services to victims of human trafficking and raises awareness in vulnerable communities. Includes the National Referral System, which strengthens coordination among agencies providing services to human trafficking victims using standard referral and reporting forms. (27,132) There are 149 referral networks established in 16 regions. (30) During the reporting period, served 305 victims of OSEC. (85) Strength CTIP works in partnership with the Advocate for the Protection and Prevention of Abuse and Exploitation of Children (APPROACH) Consortium. Initiates and sustains counter trafficking in persons activities in selected project sites in Iloilo City, Dumaguete City, and Cebu province. (3) Designed to accommodate the needs of victims of human trafficking, specifically children subjected to commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking. (3) Research was unable to determine activities undertaken during the reporting period.
Alternative Learning System Program†	Department of Education program that offers non-formal education to out-of-school children, including child laborers and children displaced from military conflict, and opportunities to attain a certificate of education equivalency. (133) Research was unable to determine activities undertaken during the reporting period.
USDOL-Funded Projects	USDOL projects in the Philippines that aim to eliminate child labor in its worst forms by improving the capacity of the national government, implementing the National Action Plan Against Child Labor, conducting research and data collection, developing strategic policies, drafting legislation, and supporting social services delivery for child domestic workers. Include: Against Child Exploitation (ACE) Project (2019-2023) , a \$5 million project implemented by World Vision; BuildCA2P: Building Capacity, Awareness, Advocacy and Programs Project (2018-2022) , a \$2.6 million project implemented by ChildFund International; SAFE Seas , implemented by Plan International USA; RICHES , implemented by the Grameen Foundation with the Philippines; Measurement, Awareness-Raising, and Policy Engagement (MAP16) Project on Child Labor and Forced Labor , implemented by ILO; and CARING Gold Mining Project , implemented by ILO. (134-139) Additional information is available on the USDOL website .

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

† Program is funded by the Government of the Philippines.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (141,142)

The Department of the Interior and Local Government issued an advisory and a circular during the reporting period aimed at addressing effective delivery of assistance to children during quarantine. It included an "Advisory on the Activation of Barangay Violence Against Women Desk and Barangay Council for the Protection of Children" which ensured the availability and accessibility of barangay services to women and children, took active measures to prevent violence against women and children, provided immediate assistance to victims of violence, and provided appropriate support during quarantine to these vulnerable populations. (5)

Although some specialized resources exist to assist victims of human trafficking, the Philippines lacked sufficient programs to care for and rehabilitate children who have been victims of OSEC. (30) In addition, there are not adequate programs to provide insight on the impact of OSEC on child victims. (49,143-145)

Although DSWD works in consultation with parents and community leaders to determine how best to assist children suspected of being involved in the drug trade, DSWD does not have programs specifically designed to increase protections for or assistance to children engaged in drug trafficking. DSWD also lacks programming to address the heightened vulnerability of children impacted by the death of familial breadwinners in the drug war. (2,146)

The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) continued to coordinate with DSWD when dealing with children allegedly involved in drug trafficking. Upon the PDEA turning over arrested children and within 8 hours of the conclusion of their court proceedings, DSWD transferred the children to either juvenile detention centers or "Houses of Hope" (*Bahay ng Pag-asa*) rehabilitation and skills training centers for children in trouble with the law. (2,3,5,147) Local government units or NGOs operated over 70 Houses of Hope throughout the country, with little oversight from the federal government. Although there is an accreditation process for these facilities administered by the federal Juvenile Justice and Welfare Council, only a small number of Houses of Hope have met the qualifications, allowing for continued corruption, maltreatment of residents, and failure to provide quality rehabilitative services. In 2020, reports continued that many Houses of Hope operate as youth detention centers where children are subjected to physical and emotional abuse, deprived of liberty, and forced into overcrowded and unhygienic cells. (44,45,92,97,147-155) In two facilities, for example, there were reported complaints of limited access to water supply, insufficient amounts of food or that food was expired, including a report that unused sacks of rice were infested with weevils. (45,148,149) The government took no known action in 2020 to hold accountable Houses of Hope alleged to have abused child residents. (44,92,97,147,150,151)

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 the Philippines (Table 11).

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework		
	Raise the minimum age for work to the age up to which education is compulsory.	2018 – 2020
Enforcement	Strengthen child labor complaint mechanisms by launching the online hotline to allow reporting of potential online sexual exploitation of children cases.	2020

	Increase funding to allow for the hiring of more law enforcement personnel, including police and prosecutors, training for forensic analysis of digital online sexual exploitation of children evidence, and create a centralized database to allow for quicker action on cases involving the worst forms of child labor.	2019 2020	-
	Authorize the labor inspectorate to assess penalties.	2015 2020	-
	Increase the number of labor inspectors to meet the ILO's technical advice; ensure the budget for the Department of Labor and Employment, Bureau of Worker Concerns includes an allocation for the salaries of labor inspectors located outside of the National Capital Region; and increase resources available to provide sufficient coverage of the workforce, particularly in the informal sector and in rural areas where child labor is prevalent.	2014 2020	-
	Develop and provide specialized training for labor inspectors on identification of child labor.	2019 2020	-
	Allow Rescue the Child Laborers Quick Action Teams to conduct unannounced compliance visits to private homes.	2018 2020	-
	Publish information on labor law enforcement efforts, including the number of child labor penalties imposed that were collected.	2015 2020	-
	Enhance efforts to prevent the inappropriate incarceration of, and violence against, children suspected to be engaged in the production and trafficking of drugs and those caught in crossfire during anti-drug operations.	2017 2020	-
	Prosecute law enforcement officials and civilians responsible for the killing of children engaged in the drug trade and officials who are complicit in the trafficking or allow traffickers to operate without impunity.	2017 2020	-
	Ensure that youth rehabilitation centers, including Houses of Hope, are accredited and in compliance with standards set by the Department of Social Welfare and Development and Juvenile Justice And Welfare Council.	2020	
	Offer criminal law enforcement officials training on laws related to the worst forms of child labor, including the proper handling of digital evidence in criminal trials.	2020	
	Prosecute trafficking crimes in a timely manner, and hire more criminal prosecutors to lessen the workload.	2020	
	Incorporate procedures to allow for an efficient exchange of restitution to victims of trafficking.	2020	
Coordination	Ensure the Inter-Agency Council Against Child Pornography is able to carry out its intended mandate.	2020	
Social Programs	Publish the results of the child labor modules from the 2017, 2018, and 2019 rounds of the Labor Force Survey.	2020	
	Publish data on the total number of confirmed online sexual exploitation of children cases each year.	2020	
	Ensure that social programs are fully implemented, including the Strengthening Local Systems and Partnerships for More Effective and Sustainable Counter-Trafficking in Persons in the Philippines, and the Alternative Learning Systems Program.	2020	
	Institute a program to address and combat the sexual abuse and exploitation of children in the production of child pornography, including live streaming.	2017 2020	-
	Provide specialized care and rehabilitative services for children who have been victimized through sexual abuse and exploitation through live streaming and in the production of child pornography by their families.	2017 2020	-
	Develop programs to increase protections for and provide assistance to children engaged in drug trafficking and children impacted by the death of a familial breadwinner to address their heightened vulnerability.	2017 2020	-
	Ensure that "Houses of Hope" (<i>Bahay ng Pag-asa</i>) child detention centers in the Philippines do not subject children to physical or emotional abuse, that those who commit such crimes are held accountable, and that centers are provided with adequate resources to remedy overcrowding and unhygienic conditions.	2017 2020	-
	Increase access to free, compulsory education by eliminating unofficial school-related fees and addressing issues related to inadequate school infrastructure, including architectural barriers.	2020	

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

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