

2022 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor: Mozambique

In 2022, Mozambique made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government convened its first annual National Conference on the Elimination of Child Labor and held awareness campaigns about child labor in all provinces. However, children in Mozambique are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in forced domestic work. Children also engage in dangerous tasks in the production of tobacco. In addition, the established minimum age for work is not in compliance with international labor standards because it does not extend to informal employment. Lastly, existing social programs are insufficient to fully address the extent of the child labor problem in Mozambique.

I. Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of Child Labor

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

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	16.2 (1,270,866)
Working children by sector	5 to 14	
Agriculture		91.3
Industry		1.4
Services		7.3
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	63.6
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	10.2
Primary Completion Rate (%)		58.2

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2020, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: Inquérito Sobre Orçamento Familiar (IOF), 2015. (2)

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

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

Sector/Industry	Activity
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Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Production of cashews, coconuts, cotton, [†] sugarcane, [†] tea, tobacco, [†] and tomatoes (3-6)
	Fishing, [†] including handling nets (6-9)
	Forestry, [†] including cutting wood, and climbing trees to collect fruit (3,6,9)
	Herding livestock, including cattle (3,6)
	Hunting, including small and wild animals (3,4)
Industry	Artisanal mining, [†] including gold and gemstones, [†] and breaking stone [†] (3,6,7,9,10)
	Construction [†] (3,7)
	Brickmaking (6)
Services	Domestic work, [†] including childcare [†] (3,6,7,10)
	Street work, including car washing [†] and street vending (3,6,9-11)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor[‡]	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,6,7,9,12,13)
	Forced labor in agriculture, domestic work, mining, and vending (6,14)
	Use in illicit activities, including drug trafficking, stealing, and assisting poachers in the illegal poaching industry (3,6)
	Recruitment of children by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict (6,15)

[†] 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.

Mozambican children, lured from rural areas with promises of work and educational opportunities, are subjected to forced domestic work and commercial sexual exploitation in urban areas in Mozambique and South Africa. Research indicates that Mozambican children are also trafficked to South Africa for forced labor in agriculture, mining, and street vending. (6,7,12,16) Research found that children in larger cities and along transit corridors are at risk of commercial sexual exploitation. The U.S. government-designated terrorist group ISIS-Mozambique also abducted and used children as soldiers, cooks, and laborers in northern Mozambique. (6,15)

Although primary education is free through the ninth grade, families must provide school supplies and uniforms. (7,9,17) Barriers to education for children also include a lack of schools, classroom space, and trained teachers. Many students, particularly in rural areas, face difficulties traveling long distances to get to school. (6,18,19) In addition, physical and sexual abuse is common in schools and research found that some male teachers coerce female students into sex. (5,20) The government estimates that only 49 percent of children complete their primary education. (5,6,9,21) Further, some LGBTQI+ students faced discrimination at secondary schools, with documented cases of discrimination in the major cities of Beira, Maputo, and Nampula. (5,6,9) By the end of 2022, approximately 1 million people, more than 50 percent of them children, were displaced due to increased terrorist-related violence in Cabo Delgado Province, up from more than 800,000 people the previous year; the increased rate of displacement creates additional barriers to secondary education for some children due to a lack of secondary schools or overcrowding. (5,6,9,22-24)

II. Legal Framework for Child Labor

Mozambique has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Mozambique's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including a lack of minimum age protections for children without formal employment relationships.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	15	Article 26 of the Labor Law; Article 4 of the Regulations on Domestic Work (25,26)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 23 of the Labor Law (26)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes	18	Hazardous Work List (27)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 10, 11, and 17 of the Trafficking in Persons Law; Articles 196 and 198 of the Penal Code (28,29)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 5, 10, and 11 of the Trafficking in Persons Law (28)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 5, 10, and 11 of the Trafficking in Persons Law; Articles 226 and 227 of the Penal Code (28,29)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 33 and 40 of the Law on Drugs (30)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Articles 2 and 23 of the Law on Military Service (31)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 2 of the Law on Military Service (31)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Articles 5 and 10 of the Trafficking in Persons Law (28)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15‡	Article 41 of the Law of Basic Child Protection; Article 7 of the Law on the National System of Education (32,33)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 41 of the Law of Basic Child Protection; Article 7 of the Law on the National System of Education (32,33)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (32,33)

The Labor Law's minimum age protections do not meet international standards as they do not apply to children working outside of formal employment relationships. (26,33-35) The Labor Law also states that children between the ages of 12 and 15 may work under certain conditions defined by the Council of Ministers, and the Regulations on Domestic Work allow children between the ages of 12 and 15 to perform domestic work with the permission of their legal guardian. (25,26) However, this minimum age of 12 for light work is not in compliance with international standards, as the age for light work should be 13 years old. (34,36)

III. Enforcement of Laws on Child Labor

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

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor and Social Security (MITESS)	Enforces child labor laws and regulations. The labor inspectorate works with the National Police Force to enforce criminal law. (9) Monitors implementation of the National Action Plan to Combat the Worst Forms of Child Labor. (6,9,17,37) During the reporting period, MITESS trained police units and community leaders on child labor prevention. Additionally, it held awareness campaigns about child labor and child labor trafficking in informal markets, schools, religious sites, and communities in all provinces. (6,15) In April 2022, MITESS convened the government's first annual National Conference on the Elimination of Child Labor, and subsequently held eight province-level conferences on child labor and trafficking. Government agencies, civil society organizations, and other partners were included in these discussions. (15)
Ministry of Industry and Commerce's General Inspectorate of Economic Activities	Enforces child labor laws and regulations related to business activities and holds awareness-raising events on child labor. (6,9,17)
Ministry of Interior and the Attorney General's Office	The National Police Force functions under the Ministry of the Interior and enforces all criminal laws, including those related to the worst forms of child labor. Through its seven-person National Criminal Investigation Service, located within the Ministry of the Interior, investigates and refers cases of human trafficking and violence against women and children to the Attorney General's Office. (6,9,17) The Attorney General's Office coordinates the government's efforts against human trafficking and child labor, and leads the National Reference Group for the Protection of Children and Combating Trafficking in Persons. (6,9,17)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Mozambique took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor and Social Security

(MITESS) that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including a lack of financial resources.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (9)	Unknown (6)
Number of Labor Inspectors	129 (9)	156 (6)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (26)	Yes (26)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Yes (9)	Yes (6)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	8,650 (9)	7,647 (6)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (9)	0 (6)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A (9)	N/A (6)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A (9)	N/A (6)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (9)	Unknown (6)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown (9)	Unknown (6)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (26)	Yes (26)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown (9)	Unknown (6)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (9)	Yes (6)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (9)	Yes (6)

Mozambique hired an additional 27 labor inspectors in 2022. (6) Limited resources, such as insufficient fuel and vehicles, may also hamper the labor inspectorate's ability to enforce child labor laws. (6,7,9,17) MITESS officials can refer survivors of child labor to either the police or social workers from the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Action (MGCAS) for family assessments and potential placement of these children in foster homes. (7,9) During the reporting period, MITESS worked with police and immigration officials to conduct awareness-raising activities in markets, schools, and locations where there may be child labor. These activities included disseminating information about work considered dangerous for children and the risk of trafficking children for labor purposes. (5,9)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Mozambique took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including the absence of published criminal enforcement data related to child labor.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Yes (9)	Yes (6)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (9)	2 (6)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (9)	Unknown (6)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (9)	Unknown (6)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (9)	Unknown (6)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (9)	Yes (6)

The government did not publish data on some criminal law enforcement efforts, such as the number of prosecutions initiated, convictions secured, and whether penalties for violations related to the worst forms of child labor were imposed. (6) However, in 2022, the government trained judicial officials on issues related to the worst forms of child labor and hosted several other trainings for border officials on child labor and human trafficking. (6) Criminal law enforcement officials also worked with the MGCAS and the National Reference Group for the Protection of Children and Combating Trafficking in Persons to refer vulnerable children to social services providers. (17) The MGCAS has a standard operating procedure with guidance on how to assist survivors of domestic abuse, including human trafficking survivors. This standard operating procedure incorporates an intake form used nationwide by law enforcement officials, including border officials, to collect the necessary data from survivors and ensure that they receive professional care and referrals to appropriate services. (36)

IV. Coordination of Government Efforts on Child Labor

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including the lack of coordination between existing mechanisms.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
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Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Multisectoral Group on Child Labor	Led by MITESS, serves as the main coordinating mechanism for child labor, and is responsible for implementing the National Action Plan on Child Labor. Includes representatives from every ministry, reports to the Prime Minister, and submits regular reports to the Council of Ministers. (6) In collaboration with the National Reference Group, assists children found in child labor, including its worst forms. (6) Research was unable to determine whether the Multisectoral Group on Child Labor was active during the reporting period.

The National Reference Group (NRG) supports efforts to prevent human trafficking and is the main coordinating body for addressing human trafficking nationally. Led by the Attorney General, in partnership with local leaders and NGO stakeholders, the NRG holds regular meetings to discuss child labor issues. (9,16) In collaboration with provincial-level groups, the NRG uses a national referral mechanism to connect child labor and human trafficking survivors to services, and facilitates training of officials and awareness-raising campaigns. (5) The government has also set up cross-border groups with each of its neighbors. (9) Research indicates that there is a need to clarify responsibilities and strengthen coordination between the Multisectoral Group on Child Labor and the NRG. (6) The Council of Ministers is charged with monitoring the government's coordination efforts in addressing child labor, and each ministry has a designated point of contact for child issues. (8) During the reporting period, the NRG and its sub-national groups met regularly to discuss child labor and human trafficking cases. (15) The government also held sensitization campaigns nationwide, raising awareness about child labor and human trafficking issues on community radio. (6,15)

V. Government Policies on Child Labor

The government has established policies that are consistent with relevant international standards on child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including a lack of implementation.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Action Plan to Combat the Worst Forms of Child Labor (2017–2022)	Addressed the underlying reasons for child labor and geographic regions of concern (Tete, Manica, Maputo Province, and Maputo City), and focused on principal sectors in which child labor occurs (mining, domestic work, and agriculture). (7) Included activities such as mapping 70 percent of occurrences of the worst forms of child labor by province, and withdrawing 20,000 children from the worst forms of child labor and enrolling them in the Basic Social Subsidy program. (37) Mandated the coordination of several key government agencies, including the Attorney General's Office and the Office for Assistance to Families and Children Victims of Violence in the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Action (MGCAS), among others. Also created a multi-sector group comprising representatives from the government, civil society, unions, and employers in the formal and informal sectors to collaborate on issues identified in the plan. (7) During the reporting period, the government

Policy	Description & Activities
	trained judicial officials, including judges, and border officials on the contents of the plan. (6)
Strategic Plan for the Preparation, Response and Recuperation of the Education Sector in Cases of Emergency	A 10-year strategic plan that aims to provide safe and quality education nationwide during and after emergency situations, focusing on the need for strong interventions to protect children, as well as the harmful effects of child labor. (9,38) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the Strategic Plan for the Preparation, Response and Recuperation of the Education Sector in Cases of Emergency during the reporting period.

VI. Social Programs to Address Child Labor

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including inadequate efforts to address child labor in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Memorandum of Understanding to Combat Child Labor in Tobacco Growing (2018–2024)	\$1.2 million, 3-year project funded by the Eliminating Child Labor in Tobacco Growing Foundation, focusing on education, awareness raising, institutional capacity building, and revision of the government's legal framework. Incorporated training for law enforcement officials. (39-41) Although the program was extended until 2024, research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the Memorandum of Understanding to Combat Child Labor in Tobacco Growing program during the reporting period. (6)

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

During the reporting period, the NGO-funded Child Talk Line (*Linha Fala Criança*), which is a hotline that receives complaints of child abuse, including those related to child labor and sexual exploitation, received at least 45 calls related to child labor. The government continues to provide technical support, and the hotline referred calls to the police and judicial actors. (6) However, research found no evidence that the government has carried out programs to assist children engaged in domestic work, and the scope of existing programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the child labor problem.

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 Mozambique (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Extend minimum age protections for all children, including children working outside of formal employment relationships.	2015 – 2022
	Raise the minimum age for light work from 12 years old to 13 years old to comply with international labor standards.	2018 – 2022
Enforcement	Publish all data on labor law enforcement efforts, including the labor inspectorate's funding and whether targeted and unannounced inspections were carried out.	2009 – 2022
	Provide labor inspectors with adequate financial resources, including vehicles and fuel, to ensure their capacity to enforce child labor laws.	2009 – 2022
	Publish data on criminal law enforcement efforts, such as the number of prosecutions initiated, convictions secured, and whether penalties for violations related to the worst forms of child labor were imposed.	2009 – 2022
Coordination	Ensure responsibilities between the Multisectoral Group on Child Labor and the National Reference Group are clearly defined, and strengthen coordination between the two agencies.	2022
	Ensure the Multisectoral Group on Child Labor effectively coordinates efforts to address child labor and reports on its activities on an annual basis.	2022
Government Policies	Finalize and fully implement the National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons.	2021 – 2022
Social Programs	Take measures to ensure that all children, including children in displaced communities, have access to education by providing supplies, uniforms, and an adequate number of schools, classroom space, and trained teachers; address barriers for children from rural areas; take preventative steps to protect children from physical and sexual abuse in schools.	2010 – 2022
	Publish activities undertaken to implement the Memorandum of Understanding to Combat Child Labor in Tobacco Growing.	2018 – 2022
	Institute programs to address child labor in domestic work and expand existing programs to address the full scope of the child labor problem.	2010 – 2022

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