

USDOL Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labour 2024

October 2025

In September 2025, the Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB) of the U.S. Department of Labour published its 2024 [annual report on the findings on the worst forms of child labour](#), which assesses progress made in the global fight against child labour. The focus for 2024 was on the legal and enforcement mandates Governments must uphold to eliminate child labour.

As in previous years, the report presents:

- Estimates of child labour prevalence, by country, including information on sectors affected
- Recommendations for government action
- Individual country assessments that identify where *Significant, Moderate, Minimal, or No Advancement* has been made in tackling the worst forms of child labour

For 2024, the highest assessment level, “Significant Advancement”, has been updated and now includes four new criteria. Governments must now have: (1) a compulsory education age; (2) free public education laws that meet international standards; (3) a functioning reporting mechanism to report child labour violations; and (4) a digital tracking system for labour inspectors to log and reference civil worst forms of child labour violations.

The summary below covers some of the key efforts, gaps and recommendations noted in the ILAB report for the following cocoa-producing countries: Brazil, Côte d’Ivoire, Cameroon, Ecuador, Ghana, Liberia, Indonesia, Madagascar, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Uganda.

Overview of 2024 ratings for major cocoa-producing countries

Overall ratings have remained stable for all cocoa-producing countries compared to 2023, except for Uganda, which saw a slight improvement to the rating of “Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement”.

Country	USDOL rating	Change from 2023
Brazil	<i>Moderate Advancement</i>	None
Côte d’Ivoire	<i>Moderate Advancement</i>	None
Cameroon	<i>Moderate Advancement</i>	None
Ecuador	<i>Significant Advancement</i>	None
Ghana	<i>Moderate Advancement</i>	None
Indonesia	<i>Moderate Advancement</i>	None
Liberia	<i>Moderate Advancement</i>	None
Madagascar	<i>Moderate Advancement</i>	None
Nigeria	<i>Moderate Advancement</i>	None
Sierra Leone	<i>Moderate Advancement</i>	None

Uganda	<i>Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Continued Practice that Delayed Advancement</i>	Slight improvement (Previously <i>Minimal Advancement – Efforts Made but Regression in Practice that Delayed Advancement</i>)
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Summary of key developments and recommendations by country

Brazil

Estimates suggest that 2.1% of children aged 5-14 were working and 2.4% of children aged 15-17 were in hazardous child labour.

Positive developments:

- The Ministry of Labor and Employment established the first permanent National Special Mobile Group to Combat Child Labor. The group reportedly removed a total of 472 children from situations of child labour in 2024.
- Updated Internal Regulations for the National Commission for the Eradication of Child Labor were approved, which extends the powers and capabilities of the commission in relation to child labour.
- A Fourth National Plan to Combat Human Trafficking was published, including a focus on child trafficking.

Areas for improvement:

- Strengthen legislation needed to protect children from trafficking so that the use of threats, force, and coercion does not need to be established for the crime of child trafficking to be proven.
- Increase the number of labour inspectors to provide adequate coverage of the workforce.
- Publish the results of a national Forced Labor Survey, conducted in 2019.

Côte d'Ivoire

Updated estimates suggest that 28.8% of children aged 10-14 were working and 12.6% of children aged 15-17 were in hazardous child labour.

Positive developments:

- Signature of the [Child Labor in Cocoa Coordinating Group Framework of Action](#), together with the Government of Ghana, to address child labour in the West African cocoa sector.
- Increased funding for the labour inspectorate and increased inspections compared to previous years.

Areas for improvement:

- Increase the allocation of financial and human resources to meet the expanding responsibilities of labour inspection and law enforcement.
- Establish free public education by law and ensure that the age of entry into apprenticeship is consistently set at 14 years in applicable laws.
- Improve access to education by increasing the number of schools in rural areas, transportation options, the number of teachers, textbooks, sanitation facilities, and classrooms.

Cameroon

Estimates suggest that 43.7% of children aged 5-14 were working. No estimates were provided for hazardous child labour.

Positive developments:

- The government began drafting the report of a study of child labour in the cocoa sector, conducted in partnership with FAO, although this has not yet been published.

- Efforts have been made in three regions to enrol children associated with non-state armed groups in Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration centres.
- Increased resources were available to the labour inspectorate, allowing the purchase of vehicles.

Areas for improvement:

- Strengthen legal provisions to protect children from trafficking, prostitution, illicit activities, and recruitment by non-state armed groups.
- Conduct and report on investigations, prosecutions or convictions related to the worst forms of child labour – none were reported in 2024, despite over 7000 labour inspections.
- Improve access to education by protecting school facilities from use by armed groups, increase the number of schools and teachers, provide adequate sanitation facilities, furniture, equipment, and support families with the cost of additional school fees, tuition and uniforms.

Ecuador

Estimates suggest that 6.6% of children aged 5-14 were working and 1.0% of children aged 15-17 were in hazardous child labour.

Positive developments:

- The Ministry of Labour finalized and launched the *Child Labour Risk Identification Model*, helping to identify territories at higher risk of child labour.
- A court ruling on unfair labour practices set a precedent for the provision of restitution to victims and families by international companies in relation to forced labour. The ruling also ordered the Ministry of Labour to strengthen institutional mechanisms to protect against forced labour, including the establishment of a registry of companies in the agriculture sector and a review of contracts for harmful labour practices.
- Cooperation agreements signed between the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion, local governments and civil society organizations to provide support to victims of child labour.

Areas for improvement:

- Conduct a nationwide child labour survey to provide updated estimates of child labour to inform planning. The last nationwide survey was in 2012.
- Increase the allocation of human and financial resources to conduct labour inspections. An additional 413 labour inspectors are needed to ensure adequate coverage.
- Ensure laws and regulations on child labour are enforced in rural areas, family-run businesses and the agriculture sector.

Ghana

Estimates suggest that 4.1% of children aged 5-14 were in child labour and 15.6% of children age 15-17 were in hazardous child labour. 63.5% of working children work in the agriculture sector.

Positive developments:

- Signature of the Child Labor in [*Cocoa Coordinating Group Framework of Action*](#), together with the Government of Côte d'Ivoire, to address child labour in the West African cocoa sector.
- Implementation of a new national action plan to tackle child labour in the cocoa sector, the *Ghana Accelerated Action Plan Against Child Labour (2023-2027)*, in partnership with international partners, civil society and industry.

Areas for improvement:

- Strengthen legislation to protect children from involvement in illicit activities, set an appropriate minimum age for voluntary recruitment by state military, and prohibit the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.
- Update the hazardous work list for children to cover all types of hazardous work, including in cocoa.

- Increase the availability of resources for labour law enforcement, including office facilities and transportation.

Indonesia

Estimates suggest that 3.7% of children aged 10-14 were working. No estimates were provided for hazardous child labour.

Positive developments:

- Establishment of a new Crimes Against Women and Children and Human Trafficking Directorate to better address violence against women and children, including child trafficking crimes.
- Establishment of a child labour liaison coordination team to work with the Ministries of Manpower, Education, and Social Affairs.

Areas for improvement:

- Strengthen legislation needed to protect children from trafficking so that the use of threats, force, and coercion does not need to be established for the crime of child trafficking to be proven.
- Specify activities in which light work may be permitted for children under the labour law.
- Improve access to education by removing provisions that permit schools to charge fees, and to discriminate on the basis of citizenship or residence status.

Liberia

Estimates suggest that 30.4% of children aged 5-14 were working. No estimates were provided for hazardous child labour.

Positive developments:

- Launch of a National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights that aims to tackle child labour, forced labour, and other exploitative and harmful working conditions in supply chains.
- Launch of a five-year initiative to assist over 70,000 children living and working on the streets.
- Organisation of four training workshops on child labour for social workers and community leaders by the National Commission on Child Labour and local non-governmental organizations.

Areas for improvement:

- Accede to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict or the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography.
- Strengthen capacity and resources available to the labour inspectorate to assess penalties for child labour and to law enforcement to make prosecutions.
- Improve access to education by building more schools, hiring more teachers in rural areas, addressing sexual abuse in schools and orphanages, providing adequate transportation to schools, subsidizing school-related costs and taking measures to support children to stay in school until they complete compulsory education.

Madagascar

Estimates suggest that 42.8% of children aged 5-14 were working and 11% of children aged 15-17 were in hazardous child labour.

Positive developments:

- Ratification of a new labour code that includes enhanced administrative procedures for labour inspections of homes with domestic workers. Training was provided to inspectors on the new code.
- Prosecution of 11 individuals for sex trafficking, with 4 individuals sentenced.

Areas for improvement:

- Create and implement a comprehensive national policy to tackle child labour, as none currently exists.
- Increase the number of labour inspectors from 235 to 307 to ensure adequate coverage of the workforce; invest in training and resourcing for the labour inspectorate to improve their capacity to conduct inspections in rural areas and the informal sector.
- Improve access to education for all children, including those in rural communities, by removing informal fees, improving school infrastructure, sanitation facilities, nutrition programs, staffing, and transportation.

Nigeria

Estimates suggest that 15.0% of children aged 5-14 are working. No estimates were provided for hazardous child labour.

Positive developments:

- Results of the [Nigeria Child Labor and Forced Labor Survey 2022](#) were released.¹
- Mid-term evaluation of the National Policy and National Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labour initiated.
- Awareness-raising campaigns and advocacy programs conducted by the government in various states, in collaboration with the International Labour Organization and other partners.

Areas for improvement:

- Raise the minimum working age from 12 to 15 to align with the compulsory education age and ensure that this applies to children who are self-employed and working in the informal sector.
- Restrict provisions for light work in agriculture and domestic work, to align with international standards.
- Increase the number of labour inspectors to 5059 to ensure adequate coverage of the workforce; increase resources available for transport, office facilities and inspections so enable the inspectorate to enforce child labour laws.

Sierra Leone

Estimates suggest that 35.1% of children aged 5-14 were working. No estimates were provided for hazardous child labour.

Positive developments:

- Adoption of a new National Action Plan Against Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children for 2024–2028.
- Engagement with stakeholders conducted in child-trafficking and child labour hotspots, educating community members about anti-trafficking laws, use of the National Referral Mechanism, and best practices for victim identification, referral, assistance, and protection.
- Expansion of services to two new shelters for trafficking victims in the districts of Kambia and Bo.

Areas for improvement:

- Improve provisions in the Child Rights Act and the Employment Act related to “light work” by specifying the number of hours, activities, and conditions in which light work may be undertaken.
- Implement and report on the outcomes of actions detailed in the National Action Plan for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor.

¹ The study, conducted in partnership with ILO shows higher rates of child labour prevalence rates than the estimates referenced above, with the prevalence of child labour estimated at 39.2% and hazardous child labour at 22.9%.

- Guarantee access to free basic public education by law for all children; address barriers by reducing school-related costs, providing transportation to schools in rural areas, increasing the number of teachers and secondary schools, and tackling abuse in schools, including sexual and other violence.

Uganda

Estimates suggest that 62.9% of children aged 5-14 were working and 6.3% of children aged 15-17 were in hazardous child labour.

Positive developments:

- Ratification of the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children.
- Launch of the National Coalition to End Child Poverty, which aims to network, raise awareness, advocate, and take action to ensure the survival, development, protection, and participation of children as established in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Areas for improvement:

- Increase funding to the labour inspectorate to carry out its mandated duties and increase the number of labour inspectors from 198 to 464 to ensure adequate coverage. No government funding was provided to conduct labour inspections in 2024.
- Ensure that district labour action plans reflect national policies implemented by the Ministry of Gender, Labor, and Social Development.
- Improve access to education by increasing the compulsory education age from age 13 to age 16, aligned with the minimum age for work; remove cost-related barriers to school attendance such as additional fees supplies, uniforms, and materials; address physical and sexual violence in schools; and improve provision of teachers, infrastructure and transportation in rural areas.