

The Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB) of the U.S. Department of Labour published its annual report on the findings on the worst forms of child labour, which assesses progress made in the global fight against child labour, on the 5th September 2024.

This year for the first time, the report also includes the Netherlands as a country which processes cocoa products linked to child labour or forced labour. China, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Dominican Republic, Ghana, India, Malawi, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Russia are also listed as countries processing goods made with inputs produced with child labour and forced labour including cotton, cocoa, copper, aluminium, sugarcane, palm oil, coconuts and tobacco.

The summary below focuses on some of the key efforts, gaps and recommendations for Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Cameroon, which are all reported to have made moderate advancement in 2023 to eliminate the worst forms of child labour. The ILAB report also contains country profiles for the following cocoa origins [Brazil](#), [Cameroon](#), [Guinea](#), [Nigeria](#), and [Sierra Leone](#).

Summary of main findings and recommendations for Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Cameroon

Côte d'Ivoire

Côte d'Ivoire's evaluation **"moderate progress" in 2023 represents a downgrade from 2022, when Côte d'Ivoire had made "significant advancement"**

According to ILAB, an estimated 25.6% of children were working in 2023 and were 70.1% attending school. Children in Côte d'Ivoire are subjected to the worst forms of child Labour, including in forced labour in the harvesting of cocoa and coffee.

Noted efforts in 2023 include increased budget for the Ministry of Education meaning increasing number of teachers and classrooms; a new action plan to address human trafficking; the creation of departmental child labour monitoring committees and committees at the village level across the country.

Gaps remain in terms of having a mechanism to assess civil penalties for labour law violations, a lack of financial resources and staffing which also impacts labour law enforcement. There are also accessibility issues for children (in terms of shortage of teachers, poor school infrastructures, insufficient classroom spaces, the lack of transportation system in rural areas, and inadequate sanitation facilities) making it difficult for them to attend school, and as a consequence more susceptible to child labour.

Recommended actions for government to advance the elimination of child labour include:

- Establishing a law for free public education.
- Creating a mechanism to assess penalties for child labour violations.
- Increasing resources and staffing for the labour inspectorate as well as for law enforcement.
- Finalising the national action plan to address child labour.
- Scaling up existing programmes such as the Child Labour Monitoring System (CLMRS), including outside of the cocoa sector.
- Improving transport and access to school, as well as providing more school classrooms and school resources.

- Ensuring that children in the worst forms of child Labour are able to access social services throughout the country.

Read the full report for [Côte d'Ivoire](#).

Ghana

Ghana's evaluation is unchanged from 2022 as "Moderate Advancement".

According to ILAB, an estimated 4.1% (335,541) of all children were working, 15.6% (345,662) of all children were involved in hazardous work across the country, and 92% of all children are attending school. Children most commonly work in agriculture, and the report underlines that sectors particularly impacted include cocoa, fishing and gold.

Noted efforts include the increased number of labour inspections, the launch of the Ghana Accelerated Action Plan Against Child Labour, as well as many trainings on child protection and human trafficking issues in local communities.

Gaps remain in Ghana's legal framework (notably around using children in illicit activities for the production and trafficking of drugs). Gaps also remain in terms of limited resources which restrict the governments' ability to enforce labour laws and implement social programmes.

Recommended actions for government to advance the elimination of child labour include:

- Updating the hazardous work list for children to cover all hazardous types of work outlined in ILO Convention n°182.
- Significantly increase the number of labour inspectors and ensuring they have adequate resources.
- Establishing a mechanism to track cases of child labour for referral to law enforcement or social service providers.
- Improving communication and coordination among criminal enforcement agencies.
- Ensuring that the Trafficking in Persons Information System is used, and that related activities are being published.
- Replicating and expand the Child Labour Monitoring System.
- Establishing additional programmes to address child labour in the cocoa, fishing, and mining sectors.

Read the full report for [Ghana](#).

Cameroon

According to ILAB, an estimated 43.7% of children were working and 80.1% of children were attending school. Children in Cameroon are subjected to the worst forms of child labour, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and in recruitment by non-state armed groups for use in conflict. Children also perform dangerous tasks in cocoa production and gold mining.

Noted efforts in 2023 include:

- A country-wide birth registration program
- Improvement in educational materials, teachers' recruitment, and inclusive schools throughout the country.
- The creation of a joint framework regulating the admission of children with disabilities to all levels of public schooling, (including higher education and vocational training)
- The assignment of specialists to police stations overseeing crimes against children.

- Providing rehabilitation services to child soldier survivors
- Launch of the National Action Plan for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour.

Gaps remain in terms of Cameroon's legal framework when it comes to requiring proof of threats, force, or coercion to establish trafficking, which contradicts international standards. Additionally, the law does not prohibit the use of children in illicit activities or their recruitment by non-state armed groups. Similarly, the use of children for prostitution or pornographic performances is not criminalized, which also goes against international standards. Finally, there is no reported penalties for labour violations, while there is a lack of enforcement of laws against the worst forms of child labour.

Recommended actions for government to advance the elimination of child labour include:

- Ratifying key international conventions concerning child labour, including the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.
- Increase the compulsory education age from 12 to 14 and establish nine years of free basic education.
- Criminalizing the use of children under 18 for prostitution, pornography, illicit activities, and the recruitment by non-state armed groups,
- Removing coercion requirements from child trafficking laws, prohibiting hazardous work for children, and enhancing enforcement by increasing funding and staffing for labour inspections, as well as improving the training and resources for law enforcement.
- Increase funding and reinforce oversight to the National Committee to Combat Child Labour, as well as increasing investments in social programs, including secure educational facilities, comprehensive access to schooling, and support for children involved in child labour.

Read the full report for [Cameroon](#).