

Committee on the Application of Standards

Date: 19 May 2025

Governments appearing on the list of individual cases have the opportunity, if they so wish, to supply written information to the Committee.

► Information on the application of ratified Conventions supplied by governments on the list of individual case

Sri Lanka (ratification: 2000)

Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138)

The Government has provided the following written information, as well as statistics on the nature of violations and penalties applied relating to the employment of children, and statistics on the school enrolment and dropout rates among children under the age of 16.

The Government extends its appreciation to the Committee of Experts for its expression of satisfaction regarding the increase in the minimum age of admission to employment to 16 years. The Government remains fully committed to taking all necessary measures to ensure that every child is protected from the risks of child labour.

Further, Sri Lanka joined Alliance 8.7 in 2018 and has been an active member of the forum since then. The country submitted its action plan on child labour, forced labour, and trafficking-in-persons at the 18th Global Coordination Group (GCG) meeting in April 2024, demonstrating its commitment.

Sri Lanka has a strong legal and administrative system to prevent child labour. Presently, the minimum age for employment is 16, and no child under that age can be employed. This is in line with the national education policy. In 2021, the list of hazardous types of work was expanded from 51 to 71 to protect young children.

The Department of Labour has taken many innovative initiatives to eliminate child labour completely from Sri Lanka. One such activity is engaging with grassroots communities and local organizations to raise awareness about child labour. With the support of the Community Police, the Department of Labour has started awareness campaigns and capacity building at community level. These are progressing well, and we hope this will help us to achieve our target.

The Department of Labour maintains a comprehensive regional office network that spans the entire island, enabling effective inspection and monitoring activities across all districts. This widespread presence allows labour inspectors to respond promptly to complaints and conduct

regular inspections, even in rural areas. Moreover, Labour Inspectors possess a strong subject knowledge and received a specialized training on child labour issues, which enhances their ability to identify and address child labour issues in the informal sector. As a result of these institutional strengths and ongoing enforcement efforts, Sri Lanka is in a relatively strong position in the region to eliminate child labour.

The grass-root level civil society awareness on social responsibility towards the elimination of child labour has been initiated in collaboration with the Community Police Division of the Sri Lanka Police by the Department of Labour. The pilot programme has been conducted covering the Colombo District in 2024. Accordingly, four divisional Officers In-Charge (OIC) of Police Station and Community Police OICs of each Police Station in Colombo District were given a special training on the 20th of August 2025. Then community police advisory committees had been convened by each community police OICs and 587 community level leaders and religious priests had been convened. Assistant Commissioners and Deputy Commissioners of the Department of Labour participated as resource persons in those awareness programmes. In parallel to this programme, trainings were provided to police OICs officers engaging in community police divisions and officials from the Department of Labour (Labour Inspectors) on the elimination of child labour. Details of the programmes are as follows. In these programmes, 244 officers participated.

A training of trainers (ToT) programme was also conducted in 2025 to create a pool of trainers from labour inspectors to conduct awareness programmes island-wide to promote social dialogue and to eliminate child labour. In this programme 63 officers were trained.

The Complaint Management System of the Department of Labour has a separate field for lodging complaints on child labour occurrences. Even anonymous complaints are investigated and the National Child Protection Authority (NCPA) has been introduced with a separate access for complaints received via the 1929 child help line.

Sri Lanka has already managed to bring the prevalence of all forms of child labour to a minor level. As per the Child Activity Survey 2016, the percentage of child labour was 1 per cent. A study on child labour in Colombo District has been done recently (2024) by the Statistics Division of the Department of Labour with a sample of 1000 households to identify the risk and prevalence of child labour. As per the study, only 0.3 per cent reported as children engaged in economic activities which is less than the statistics of the 2016 Child Activity Survey.