

Committee on the Application of Standards

Date: 15 May 2026

If they so wish, Governments appearing on the preliminary list of individual cases have the opportunity to supply on a purely voluntary basis, written information before 18 May 2026.

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

Lao People's Democratic Republic (ratification: 2005)

Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138)

The Government has provided the following written information as well as copies of the Law on Vocational Education and the Decree on Labour Inspection.

The progressive elimination of child labour, including in hazardous work and in rural areas

The Government has taken concrete steps to eliminate child labour in line with the Convention by strengthening legislation on minimum age and hazardous work and advancing the National Action Plan on the Prevention and Elimination of Child Labour, with a focus on agriculture and informal sectors in rural areas. It has increased the number of trained labour inspectors and conducted targeted inspections, resulting in the identification of violations, withdrawal of children from hazardous work, and enforcement of penalties. The Government has also implemented community-based programmes in rural districts to support vulnerable families and reduce reliance on child labour, while expanding access to education through scholarships, school feeding programmes, and reintegration of working children into schools. In cooperation with partners such as the ILO and UNICEF, it has carried out awareness-raising campaigns to change attitudes toward child labour. Improved data collection, including national surveys, shows that child labour has declined from 41.5 per cent in 2017 to 23 per cent in 2023; however, the Government acknowledges that child labour remains prevalent, particularly in hazardous conditions and rural areas, and commits to further strengthening its efforts. The National Plan of Action is being considered as the National Strategy on Prevention and Elimination of Child Labour, and the Government assures the Committee that it will provide a full copy of the updated Strategy immediately upon its formal adoption.

The Government will continue to strengthen its data collection and monitoring systems to provide updated and reliable statistical information on the nature, extent, and trends of child labour, in line with its obligations under the Convention. In this regard, the Government will improve administrative data systems to ensure comprehensive and disaggregated data by age, gender, sector, and rural-urban location, in collaboration with international partners.

Furthermore, the Government remains dedicated to maintaining transparency by continuing its collaboration with the Lao Statistics Bureau and UNICEF to produce regular, updated statistical data. This ongoing data collection will not only allow the Government to monitor the nature and extent of child labour trends, but ensure that its “redoubled efforts” lead to the progressive and total elimination of child labour in Lao People’s Democratic Republic.

The rate of child labour in the country remains high, including in hazardous work

The new Decree on Labour Inspection is now in force and actively implemented to strengthen the monitoring of child labour in line with the Convention. Under this Decree, the authority and capacity of labour inspectors have been enhanced, including the ability to conduct inspections in both formal and informal sectors, particularly in rural and high-risk areas. The Government has increased the number of trained inspectors and carried out targeted inspections in sectors such as agriculture, construction, and small-scale enterprises, leading to the detection of cases of underage and hazardous child labour. The Government will continue to strengthen enforcement and provide detailed data on inspection activities, violations, and penalties in future reports.

Regarding hazardous work for under 16 years of age

The Government is committed to taking the necessary measures to bring national legislation into full conformity with the Convention by ensuring that no child under the age of 16 is authorized to perform hazardous work under any circumstances. Regarding Decision No. 4677/MOLSW (2023), it was introduced to update the list of hazardous occupations and to better regulate the participation of young persons in vocational training and apprenticeship settings, including allowing 15-year-olds to engage in certain work activities only under strict conditions such as safety training, supervision, technical guidance, and provision of protective equipment. However, the Government recognizes the concern that this provision is not fully aligned with Article 3(3) of the Convention, which clearly sets 16 years as the minimum age for any authorization to perform hazardous work, even when protective measures and training are provided. The Government acknowledges that maintaining this lower age threshold may create a risk of inconsistency with international labour standards on child protection. In addition, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare is currently reviewing Decision No. 4677/MOLSW with the aim of bringing national legislation fully into compliance. This includes assessing amendments to ensure that all hazardous work is strictly prohibited for persons under 16, while strengthening vocational training frameworks that are safe and non-hazardous for younger adolescents. The Government also indicates its commitment to improving enforcement, inspection, and reporting mechanisms, and will provide updates on legislative revisions and implementation of progress to the relevant supervisory bodies.

Regarding the minimum age for apprenticeship

The Government confirms that the Law on Vocational Education (Amended) No. 63/NA (2019) sets the minimum age for entering into basic vocational training and apprenticeship programmes at 14 years. This legislative provision is designed to align with Article 6 of the Convention, which permits vocational training for individuals from the age of 14 in Member States whose economic and educational facilities are still in a stage of development. This age threshold is further reinforced by article 102 of the Labour Law (Amended) No. 43/NA (2013), which stipulates that employers may only engage persons between the ages of 14 and 18 for specific types of work that are not hazardous and do not impede their physical or mental

development. Consequently, any apprenticeship undertaken by a 14-year-old is legally categorized as a learning and skill-acquisition process rather than exploitative employment.

As requested by the Committee of Experts, the following translated provisions from the National Gazette are provided as evidence of compliance as provided in article 24 (Basic Vocational Training): “Basic vocational training provides short-term technical and vocational skills to individuals to enable them to secure a career and find employment. This level of training is specifically intended for students who have completed primary school or those who have not yet finished general education, provided that the participants in these programs are at least 14 years of age.”

In addition, article 85 (Prohibitions for Vocational Education Institutions): “Vocational education institutions are strictly prohibited from allowing students or apprentices to perform work that is heavy, dangerous to their health, or in violation of the regulations concerning the protection of children and young workers.”

However, the Government remains steadfast in its efforts to bridge the gap between basic education and the labour market through safe, regulated vocational pathways. By maintaining the apprenticeship age at 14, the Government ensures that youth who have completed their primary and lower-secondary cycles have immediate access to skill-building opportunities, thereby reducing the risk of informal and unprotected child labour. All such programmes are subject to inspection by the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare to ensure strict adherence to the safety standards mandated by both national law and international Conventions.

Regarding the necessary measures to combat the trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children

The Government has been trying all its efforts and measures to combat trafficking in persons and the commercial sexual exploitation of children which are being actively addressed under the Anti-Human Trafficking Law and relevant provisions of the Penal Code through: (i) strengthened multi-sector coordination among police, prosecutors, border officials, and social welfare agencies; (ii) improved mechanisms for identifying, referring, and protecting child victims; (iii) enhanced training of law enforcement and judicial personnel to support investigation and prosecution of cases; and (iv) efforts to establish more systematic monitoring and reporting of complaints, investigations, prosecutions, convictions, and penalties. At the same time, the Government acknowledges concerns raised by international bodies regarding increasing trafficking risks, low prosecution rates, and limited institutional resources, and reaffirms its commitment to intensify prevention, ensure accountability of perpetrators through effective and dissuasive sanctions, and improve overall enforcement capacity and victim protection systems nationwide.

The prevention of victims of trafficking in persons and commercial sexual exploitation

The Government has undertaken time-bound and targeted measures to prevent and eliminate the trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children by organizing specialized training for 277 police, border, labour, consular, and social service officials across eight provinces to strengthen early identification of child victims, implementing the 2020 Guidelines for the Protection, Assistance and Referral for Victims of Trafficking to enhance inter-agency coordination and standardize victim-centred identification, referral, and assistance procedures. It has also supported rehabilitation and reintegration efforts in cooperation with national organizations such as the Lao Women’s Union, which assisted 226 child victims or at-risk children between 2017 and 2022 through shelter, healthcare,

psychosocial support, education, and vocational training. However, it acknowledges ongoing gaps in rights-based early identification and referral mechanisms as noted by international bodies and therefore commits to intensify prevention through awareness-raising and border control measures, strengthen victim protection services, improve coordination and capacity of frontline responders, and develop more comprehensive data systems to report on the number of child victims removed from exploitation and provided with appropriate support and social integration services.

This report is written in full consultation with representatives of the Lao Federation of Trade Unions (Representatives of Employees) and Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Representatives of Employers) and participation of relevant agencies.