

Approving Hazardous and Light Work Lists in Liberia

ATLAS SNAPSHOT

Winrock International's Attaining Lasting Change for Better Enforcement of Labor and Criminal Law to Address Child Labor, Forced Labor and Human Trafficking (ATLAS) project worked with governments in Thailand, Liberia, Paraguay, and Argentina to improve their ability to address child labor, forced labor, and human trafficking through strengthened laws, regulations, and policies; improved enforcement of existing laws; and increased coordination between actors.

In Liberia, child labor remains an all too common phenomenon with many boys, girls, and adolescents working under hazardous or unsafe conditions. Winrock has been supporting Liberian efforts to address child labor through a series of projects since 2012. This work came to fruition when on June 13, 2022, the nation's Minister of Labor officially approved Hazardous and Light Work Lists to govern child labor in the country.

The Hazardous Work List specifies types of hazardous work that no child under 18 may undertake while the Light Work List details appropriate light work for children ages 13-14. The Lists were originally developed by Winrock, project partner Lawyers without Borders, and local stakeholders in 2018 under the [Country-Level Engagement and Assistance to Reduce Child Labor II \(CLEAR II\)](#) project.

Under that project, "We started at the national level," explained project champion Patience Heah, national coordinator of the National Commission on Child Labor. "We had a series of consultations with workers' associations and employers' associations and then civil society movements and the Ministry of Labor. From there we did regional consultations on the Lists, and then we came back to validate the Lists... Winrock [was] very instrumental in that process."

However, the Lists were not approved by the end of CLEAR II, and a Pre-Situational Analysis under the ATLAS project in 2021 identified their approval as a major gap in Liberia's legislative framework.



Liberia's Minister of Labor officially approves Hazardous and Light Work Lists at a Winrock event

Thus, in early 2022, Winrock staff presented the already completed Lists to the new Minister of Labor to press for their approval. The Minister indicated that he was previously unaware that the Lists had been developed, and he acted quickly to ensure their approval, signing and sealing the documents at an ATLAS-sponsored event to commemorate World Day Against Child Labor. The minister announced ratification of ILO Convention No. 138 on the minimum age to work at the same event.

"We have for the first time as a nation come up with a list of what a child may do in terms of work and what a child should not do," Minister Charles Gibson said as he approved the Lists.

Types of hazardous work prohibited for children under 18 include rubber tapping, palm cutting, rock crushing, mining underground or underwater, and other tasks across various sectors. Types of light work permitted for children aged 13-14 include light domestic work not involving dangerous machinery or chemicals, selling and helping in family shops, and non-hazardous agricultural tasks such as watering flowers or crops, weeding, and gardening without dangerous tools.

The Lists represent a major achievement under Outcome 1 of the ATLAS project – strengthened labor and/or criminal legal frameworks concerning child labor, forced labor, and/or human trafficking – and provide a lasting framework and guidance for the enforcement of child labor laws in Liberia for years to come.