

Trump cuts 69 global programs tackling child labor and human trafficking

 theguardian.com/us-news/2025/mar/27/trump-cuts-child-labor-human-trafficking-programs

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March 27, 2025



The US Department of Labor building is seen behind a sign marking the location of the agency's headquarters in Washington DC. Photograph: J David Ake/Getty Images

More than \$500m in grants axed as US risks decades of progress in protecting vulnerable workers worldwide

The [Donald Trump](#) administration has terminated 69 international programs aimed at combating child labor, forced labor and [human trafficking](#), potentially undermining decades of progress in protecting vulnerable workers globally.

The Washington Post [obtained an email](#) detailing how the US Department of Labor's bureau of international labor affairs (ILAB) will immediately end grants totaling more than \$500m that supported labor standard enforcement across 40 countries, including critical initiatives in Mexico, Central America, south-east Asia and Africa.

John Clark, a Trump-appointed official, in the email justified the cuts by citing a “lack of alignment with agency priorities and national interest”. The department’s spokesperson, Courtney Parella, echoed this sentiment, telling the Post that the administration wants to prioritize “investments in the American workforce”.

The terminated programs covered a wide range of interventions, from preventing child labor in agricultural sectors to addressing human rights abuses in fisheries and electronics supply chains. In Honduras alone, a \$13m grant had already helped over 6,000 children enter educational programs and trained 500 labor inspectors.

ILAB, established in the aftermath of the second world war, has long been a major player in setting and enforcing international labor standards in collaboration with the United Nations’ International Labor Organization (ILO).

Children are believed to make up 38% of human trafficking victims globally, according to a report earlier this month [from the United Nations](#), which notes how girls are increasingly trafficked for sexual exploitation and forced labor while boys are primarily trafficked for forced labor and criminal activities. The number of children involved in child labor is estimated to be around 160 million, [according to the ILO](#).

The decision is part of a broader administration strategy to reduce federal international assistance following a day one executive order from Trump.

Earlier this month, the secretary of state, Marco Rubio, similarly [announced huge cuts](#) to US Agency for International Development (USAID) programs, while the Guardian [obtained a cable](#) on the US freezing most foreign aid to South Africa because of alleged discrimination against white Afrikaners.