

In 2012, Guinea-Bissau made a minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. From January until April, 2012 when a military coup took place, the Government continued to participate in the ECOWAS project, which works to combat the worst forms of child labor. The Government also collaborated with multilateral organizations, such as the World Bank, to support its food security efforts and educational initiatives. However, since the coup, Government efforts to address child labor have stalled. Consequently, Guinea-Bissau has neither established a list of hazardous occupations that are prohibited for children, nor provided enforcement officials with appropriate training and resources to monitor, investigate, and prosecute cases of child labor. Children continue to engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in dangerous activities in agriculture and forced begging.



Additionally, there is some evidence to suggest that children herd cattle and work in mines.(3, 11) Children herding livestock may suffer injuries such as being bitten, butted, gored or trampled by animals.(13)

Statistics on Working Children and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working	5-14 yrs.	47.3 (219,734)
Attending School	5-14 yrs.	56.9
Combining Work and School	7-14 yrs.	34.6
Primary Completion Rate		67.6

Sources:

Primary completion rate: Data from 2010, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2013.(1)

All other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from MICS3 Survey, 2006.(2)

Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Children in Guinea-Bissau are engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including in dangerous activities in agriculture and forced begging.(3-6) Preliminary findings from UNICEF's 2010 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey indicate that approximately 57 percent of children between the ages of 5 and 14 are engaged in some form of economic activity. Of those, 65 percent are found laboring in rural areas.(7) There is limited evidence of children laboring in the fields producing cashews and rice rather than attending school.(3, 5, 8) Children working in agriculture may use dangerous tools, carry heavy loads, and apply harmful pesticides.(9, 10) Limited evidence also suggests that children work in the fishing industry.(3, 11) These children may work long hours, perform physically demanding tasks, and face dangers such as drowning.(12)

In Guinea-Bissau, it is traditional practice to send boys, known as *talibés*, away to be educated by Koranic teachers. Though many teachers carry out the intended tradition of providing education, some instead force students to beg on the streets for money and food and to then surrender their earnings.(14-16) Teachers who force *talibés* to beg typically set a daily quota; if they do not meet the quota, they may be beaten. On the streets, these children work long hours and are vulnerable to car accidents, disease and severe weather, including scorching heat, as well as the risk of sexual exploitation.(3, 14-16)

In urban areas, there are reports of children working on the streets, but specific information on hazards is unknown.(3, 5, 14) Guinea-Bissau's Ministry of Justice and the UNDP report that some children who sell goods on the street are obligated by their families to bring home a certain amount of income. If they are unable to do so, they are likely to be subjected to physical violence.(8) In order to meet their families' demands, some of these children engage in prostitution to avoid corporal punishment.(8) Children are also reported to work as domestic servants.(3, 5, 14) They may be required to work long hours, performing strenuous tasks, without sufficient food or shelter. These children may be isolated in private homes and are susceptible to physical and sexual abuse.(17) Evidence suggests that some children involved in street work and domestic service may do so under forced conditions.(14, 18)

There is some evidence of children being engaged in commercial sexual exploitation.(8, 14, 18) Some children, including *talibés*, are trafficked internally and internationally to Senegal, as well as to other neighboring countries for domestic work, forced begging, and agricultural labor.(14, 18, 19)

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Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The General Labor Law sets the minimum age for employment at 14. It prohibits children younger than 18 from engaging in heavy or dangerous labor, including mining.(20) However, the Government has not established a list of hazardous occupations that are prohibited for children. The minimum age for night work is also set at 18.(20)

International Conventions and Selected Laws on Child Labor and Education

	C138, Minimum Age	✓
	C182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
	CRC	✓
	CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	No
	CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
	Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓
	Minimum Age for Work	14
	Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	18
	Compulsory Education Age	13
	Free Public Education	Yes

The Penal Code criminalizes the commercial sexual exploitation of all persons, including children, as well as forced labor for the purpose of sexual exploitation.(21) The Prevention and Trafficking in Persons Law prohibits the recruitment, transporting and harboring of an individual for the purpose of prostitution, forced labor, or debt bondage. Perpetrators can receive prison sentences of up to 15 years if found guilty.(22) Penalties are greater when such crimes are committed by guardians, including religious teachers or other persons responsible for the care and protection of children. The antitrafficking law also punishes the production of pornography and sexual exploitation with prison terms of 5 to 8 years.(22) In addition, this legislation mandates social assistance for victims of human trafficking and calls for antitrafficking prevention initiatives.(22)

The minimum age for compulsory military recruitment is 18. Under the law children may voluntarily enter the military at age 16 with parental consent, but are not permitted into combat activities.(3, 23, 24) The Government has not yet established legislation that prohibits the use of children for illicit activities.

The Education Law establishes compulsory education through the ninth grade.(25) The Government has reported to the UNESCO Institute of Statistics that education is compulsory until age 13.(26) School is free for all children until the sixth grade. For grades seven through nine, school is free contingent upon available resources.(25) However, access to education is hindered by the lack of schools and trained teachers, poor teaching methods, and informal school fees such as registration and monthly charges, which are common in public schools.(4, 15) As reported in the National Strategy to Combat Poverty, for every 100 children who enroll in first grade, only 40 children reach the sixth grade.(27)

Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement

The National Institute for Women and Children (INMC) at the Ministry of Social Solidarity, Family, and the Combat against Poverty coordinates efforts to protect the rights of children.(28, 29)

The Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee coordinates government efforts to combat human trafficking. The Committee is led by the INMC and includes representatives from the Ministries of Interior, Justice, Health, Education, and Transportation, as well as various NGOs.(19) To strengthen efforts to fight human trafficking, the Trafficking Act established a National Committee to Prevent, Combat and Assist Victims of Trafficking.(22) However, it is not clear what the role of this Committee is in relation to the established Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee or if it is operational.

Child labor legislation is enforced by the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Civil Service and Labor, in collaboration with the INMC.(3, 29) Enforcement officials, including labor inspectors, do not have appropriate training and equipment to carry out inspections and investigations of child labor cases and the lack of lawyers and courts in rural areas limits law enforcement.(3, 19, 30) During the reporting period, there was no information available on the number of investigations, labor inspections, prosecutions or convictions conducted regarding child labor.

The Ministry of Interior leads efforts to combat child trafficking.(3) Police and border officials are tasked with preventing traffickers from entering or exiting the country with children. Local police and the INMC, along with UNICEF, maintain data on child trafficking.(19) However, there is no information available on the number of human trafficking investigations, prosecutions or convictions conducted during the reporting period.

The Government of Guinea-Bissau works closely with the Government of Senegal to combat child trafficking. Together, they repatriated 45 child victims of trafficking from Senegal back to Guinea-Bissau in 2012.(3)

Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Research found no evidence of a comprehensive policy to combat the worst forms of child labor.

The Education Action Plan for All (2000-2015) guides Guinea-Bissau's efforts to ensure universal access to education and facilitate interagency coordination.(31)

A National Action Plan on Trafficking (2011-2013) was adopted in the previous reporting period to guide implementation of the anti-trafficking law. However, research was unable to identify what actions have been carried out by the Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee to achieve this goal.(18, 19)

The Government continued to implement the National Strategy to Combat Poverty (2011-2015), which seeks to reduce poverty from 69.3 percent to 59 percent, and extreme poverty from 33 percent to 20 percent, by 2015 by improving access to basic services and generating income and employment opportunities. One of its priority areas is to strengthen government coordination and mechanisms to protect at-risk children, including children engaged in child labor.(32)

As a member of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking countries (CPLP), Guinea-Bissau has established four target areas to combat child labor. These include the exchange of information and experiences, awareness-raising campaigns, use of statistical methodologies to collect child labor data, as well as technical cooperation and training.(33-35)

Social Programs to Eliminate or Prevent the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Government, in collaboration with the International Partnership for Human Development, continues to carry out a national school lunch program that covers over 300 schools and reaches over 88,000 children.(28, 36, 37) It also participates in the World Bank's Global Partnership for Education initiative that helps low-income countries ensure that all children attend school, stay in school longer and receive a quality education.(38) The World Bank and the European Union also support Guinea-Bissau's efforts to improve food security. They continue providing school meals to children and food-for-work opportunities for adults.(39)

Guinea-Bissau has a cash transfer program aimed at vulnerable populations that benefits 2,500 individuals throughout the country.(4) However, the Second National Strategy to Combat Poverty documents that the poverty rate has increased, underscoring the national need to expand social safety net programs such as this one.(32)

As a member country of ECOWAS, Guinea-Bissau continues to participate in two regional projects funded by USDOL that seek to strengthen the role of ECOWAS in combating the worst forms of child labor in West Africa: the 4-year, \$7.9 million ECOWAS I project and the 3-year, \$5 million ECOWAS II project.(40, 41) In 2012, the labor ministers of the 15 ECOWAS countries adopted a regional action plan on child labor, focusing on the worst forms. The objective of the plan is to eliminate the worst forms of child labor in West Africa by 2015 and to continue to progress toward the total elimination of child labor.(42)

The Government of Guinea-Bissau continues to take part in a USDOS-funded, 2-year \$400,000 initiative to support antitrafficking efforts and strengthen government and civil society capacity to provide services to child victims.(43) Research has not identified other government programs that address other worst forms of child labor such as in agriculture or street work.

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Based on the reporting above, the following actions would advance the elimination of the worst forms of child labor in Guinea-Bissau:

Area	Suggested Actions	Year(s) Action Recommended
Laws and Regulations	Establish a comprehensive list of hazardous activities prohibited for children younger than age 18.	2009, 2011, 2012
	Ratify the UN Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict.	2011, 2012
	Adopt legislation that bans the use of children for illicit activities.	2011, 2012
	Clarify the age to which education is compulsory.	2011, 2012
	Ensure that access to education is not hindered by the lack of trained teachers and informal fees	2011, 2012
Coordination and Enforcement	Clarify the roles of the Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee and the National Committee to Prevent, Combat and Assist Victims of Trafficking.	2011, 2012
	Boost institutional capacity of the Ministries of Interior, Justice, and Civil Service and Labor to enforce child labor legislation by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training enforcement officials on child labor legislation. • Providing enforcement officials with sufficient resources to monitor, investigate and prosecute child labor and child trafficking cases. • Expand the number of courts in areas with high rates of child labor and child trafficking. • Making information publicly available about labor inspections, including the number of labor inspectors, inspections, violations, enforcement actions and prosecutions related to the worst forms of child labor. 	2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 2011, 2012 2010, 2011, 2012 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
Policies	Conduct research to complement the 2010 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey in order to determine the extent and nature of the worst forms of child labor in agriculture and street work.	2011, 2012
Social Programs	Develop new programs and expand existing programs to reach more children engaged in the worst forms of child labor, particularly those engaged in agriculture, forced begging and street work.	2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
	Expand social safety net programs aimed at vulnerable populations.	2011, 2012

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