

Ethiopia

Government Policies and Programs to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Government of Ethiopia participates in a Child Labor Forum initiated by the ILO regional office in Addis Ababa to combat the worst forms of child labor by creating an umbrella organization comprised of government ministries, UN agencies, trade unions and employer organizations, embassies, and NGOs.⁹⁴⁷ The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MOLSA) is working with the Ethiopian Central Statistical Authority and ILO-IPEC's SIMPOC to conduct a national household survey on child labor.⁹⁴⁸ The Ethiopian Government aims to provide universal primary education by the year 2020. It has adopted an Educational Sector Development Program to construct new schools, to increase the availability of textbooks in local languages, to train additional teachers, and to expand vocational training. The government built 303 new schools in 1999.⁹⁴⁹

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

In 1999, the ILO estimated that 53.7 percent of children between the ages of 10 and 14 in Ethiopia were working.⁹⁵⁰ In urban areas, children work as domestic workers, street peddlers, as employees in private enterprises,⁹⁵¹ and in the agricultural sector on state-owned farms.⁹⁵² Children work on commercial cotton, sugarcane, coffee, and tea farms.⁹⁵³ In rural areas, children work on family farms. Household chores may require long hours and excessive physical exertion, and interfere with school, particularly in the case of girls.⁹⁵⁴ Children are also shipped to Saudi Arabia

⁹⁴⁷ U.S. Embassy—Addis Ababa, unclassified telegram no. 1343, April 2000 [hereinafter unclassified telegram 1343].

⁹⁴⁸ Dr. Abdulaki Hasen, General Manager of the Ethiopian Central Statistical Authority, interview by USDOL official, August 9, 2000. Results from the survey will be available in 2002. See ILO-IPEC electronic correspondence to USDOL official, October 15, 2001.

⁹⁴⁹ U.S. Embassy—Addis Ababa, unclassified telegram no. 1965, June 2000.

⁹⁵⁰ According to the ILO, 3,878,213 million children are working. See ILO, *Yearbook of Labour Statistics for 2000* (Geneva, 2000).

⁹⁵¹ Children working as domestic servants, most of whom are girls, are often victims of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, including rape. See ILO/EAMAT, *A Study on Child Labour in an Urban District of Addis Ababa*, working paper on child labour no. 2 (Addis Ababa, 2000), 3, 6. Street children are reported to live in urban areas and, in particular, Addis Ababa. Some of these children beg or work in the informal sector in order to survive. See also *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2000—Ethiopia* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of State, 2001) [hereinafter *Country Reports 2000*], Section 5, at <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2000/af/index.cfm?docid=789>.

⁹⁵² For example, on the Bebeke Coffee Farm, an estimated 490 children ranging from ages 7 to 16 were found to be working on the farm. See ILO/EAMAT, *A Study on Child Labour in Rural Ethiopia*, working paper no. 1 (Addis Ababa, 1999) [hereinafter *Child Labour in Rural Ethiopia*], 4-10. See also *Country Reports 2000* and Carol Cox, Third Secretary, Political Section and Girma Abebe, Foreign Service National, U.S. Embassy, interview by USDOL official, August 7, 2000.

and elsewhere in the Middle East to work as house servants or nannies.⁹⁵⁵ One of the most visible worst forms of child labor is prostitution. Girls as young as 11 years old are recruited by the commercial sex industry to work in brothels, bars, and hotels.⁹⁵⁶ Recruitment of children into the armed forces occurred in 1999, before the border conflict with Eritrea. There is no evidence that underage recruitment by the government is continuing.⁹⁵⁷ Children as young as 11 to 14 years of age reportedly join local militias.⁹⁵⁸

Primary education is compulsory and free in Ethiopia; however, there are not enough schools to accommodate all students.⁹⁵⁹ Most schools are located in urban districts, so children living in rural areas of Ethiopia do not have the same educational opportunities available to them.⁹⁶⁰ In 1996, the gross primary enrollment rate was 42.9 percent, and the net primary enrollment rate was 32 percent.⁹⁶¹

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

Ethiopia's Labor Proclamation sets the minimum age for employment at 14 years.⁹⁶² Under the Proclamation, employers are forbidden to employ young workers when the nature of the job or the conditions under which it is carried out may endanger the life or health of the children.

⁹⁵³ Children working on commercial farms are often exposed to environmental toxins that can be detrimental to their health, especially on cotton farms. The cotton farms are located in the *kolla* zone, where children tend to be at a higher risk for malaria, yellow fever, and snakebites. See *Child Labour in Rural Ethiopia* at 3-10.

⁹⁵⁴ Embassy of Ethiopia, *Brief Report on Efforts Made by Ethiopia to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labour*, October 2001 [hereinafter *Efforts Made to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labour*], 3.

⁹⁵⁵ *Country Reports 2000* at Sections 5, 6c, 6f. See also Education International, *El Barometer on Human and Trade Union Rights in the Education Sector* (Brussels, Belgium, 1998), 46.

⁹⁵⁶ Unclassified telegram 1343. Underground child sex trade and sex tourism in Ethiopia are reportedly on the rise and are more organized than once believed. Children's involvement in the commercial sex trade occurs mainly in resort towns and truck stops in Addis Ababa. Children in the sex industry are at great risk for contracting sexually transmitted diseases, particularly HIV infection, but are reportedly kept unaware of this risk. See *Country Reports 2000* at Section 5.

⁹⁵⁷ *Country Reports 2000* at Section 5. See also Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, *Global Report 2000: Ethiopia* [hereinafter *Global Report 2000*], at <http://www.child-soldiers.org> on 11/14/01.

⁹⁵⁸ *Country Reports 2000* at Section 5. The Ministry of Defense does not permit individuals under age 18 to enlist in the military, but the policy is difficult to enforce, since an estimated 95 percent of Ethiopians have no birth certificates. See Seife Tadelle, President of Ethiopian Youth League, interview by USDOL official, August 8, 2000. See also *Global Report 2000*.

⁹⁵⁹ U.S. Embassy—Addis Ababa, unclassified telegram no. 3394, November 2001.

⁹⁶⁰ *Child Labour in Rural Ethiopia* at 1.

⁹⁶¹ *World Development Indicators 2001* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2001) [CD-ROM].

Some prohibited activities defined in the proclamation are transporting goods by air, land, or sea; working with electric power generation plants; and performing underground work (e.g., quarrying in mines).⁹⁶³ Children between 14 and 18 years are prohibited from working over seven hours per day; overtime; between the hours of 10 p.m. and 6 a.m.; during weekly rest days; and on public holidays.⁹⁶⁴ Ethiopia's Penal Code includes provisions specifically prohibiting child trafficking, child prostitution, and bonded child labor.⁹⁶⁵ The Constitution (Article 36) also stipulates that children are not to be subjected to hazardous work or exploitative practices.⁹⁶⁶ Enforcement of labor laws regarding children is reportedly weak, due in large part to an insufficient number of labor inspectors. Currently, about 50 labor inspectors in MOLSA enforce all the country's labor laws in the formal sector, and the government maintains child labor is not a problem in the formal economy.⁹⁶⁷

The Government of Ethiopia ratified ILO Convention 138 on May 27, 1999, and has not ratified ILO Convention 182.⁹⁶⁸

⁹⁶² *Negarit Gazeta*, Proclamation No. 42/1993, Part Six, Chapter 2, Article 89 (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: *Negarit Gazeta of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia*) [hereinafter Proclamation No. 42/1993], 295.

⁹⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶⁴ Proclamation No. 42/1993, Part Six, Chapter 2, Articles 90, 91, at 295.

⁹⁶⁵ The trafficking of women and children is punishable by imprisonment of up to 5 years, with fines up to 10,000 birr (USD 1,244). *See* Tilahun Teshome, Dean of the Faculty of Law, Addis Ababa University, interview by USDOL official, August 10, 2000. Currency conversion at <http://www.carosta.de/frames/convert.htm> on 1/30/02.

⁹⁶⁶ *Efforts Made to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labour* at 3.

⁹⁶⁷ Getaneh Mitiku, Head of Ethiopian Department of Labor, Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, interview by USDOL official, August 7, 2000.

⁹⁶⁸ ILOLEX database: Ethiopia at <http://ilolex.ilo.ch:1567/english>.

NOTE: Hard copies of all Web citations are on file.