

Rwanda

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

The Government of Rwanda is participating in a regional, four-year ILO-IPEC program funded by USDOL that is designed to prevent the involvement of children in armed conflicts in Central Africa.³⁰⁴³ In August 2001, UNICEF, along with the International Committee for the Red Cross, the World Food Programme, the International Rescue Committee, and Save the Children (UK), set up a rehabilitation center to care for, rehabilitate and reintegrate former child soldiers in Rwanda.³⁰⁴⁴

In 2000, Rwanda's Ministry of Education, in conjunction with the World Bank, initiated a five-year, USD 35 million program to build capacity in the educational sector.³⁰⁴⁵ The program includes components designed to construct new schools, increase access to primary schools, improve the quality of education, improve teacher training and curriculum development, increase textbook availability, strengthen the administration of the educational system, and increase community involvement in the rehabilitation of the educational system.³⁰⁴⁶

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

In 2000, the ILO estimated that 41.4 percent of children ages 10 to 14 years in Rwanda were working.³⁰⁴⁷ Most children work in the agricultural sector.³⁰⁴⁸ A study by the Ministry of Labor and UNICEF estimated that 2,140 girls are engaged in prostitution in urban areas.³⁰⁴⁹ Rwandan

³⁰⁴³ The first phase of the project ended in 2002. The second phase of the project is estimated to be completed in three years. ILO-IPEC, *Regional Programme on the Prevention and Reintegration of Children Involved in Armed Conflict in Central Africa (Phase I: Identification of a Strategy for Concerted Action)*, project document, Geneva, July, 2001, 1. See also ILO-IPEC, *Regional Programme on the Prevention and Reintegration of Children Involved in Armed Conflicts in Central Africa (Phase I: Identification of a Strategy for Concerted Action)*, technical progress report, Geneva, September 15, 2002.

³⁰⁴⁴ UNICEF, *Hundreds of Ex-Child Soldiers Begin Rehabilitation in Rwanda- Newly Demobilized Children Get Trauma Counselling While Families Are Traced*, August 20, 2001, [cited December 18, 2002]; available from http://www.hri.ca/children/conflict/rwanda_200801.htm. As of June 10, 2002, the program had reunited 328 child soldiers with their families. See Integrated Regional Information Networks, "Rwanda: Interview with UNICEF representative Theophane Nikyema", IRINnews.org, [online], June 10, 2002 [cited October 10, 2002]; available from http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=28223&SelectRegion=Great_Lakes&SelectCountry=RWANDA.

³⁰⁴⁵ World Bank, *Rwanda- Human Resources Development Project*, project appraisal document, no. 19990-Rw, Washington, D.C., May 8, 2000, 1 [cited December 18, 2002]; available from http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDServlet?pcont=details&eid=000094946_00051905304940.

³⁰⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁴⁷ World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2002* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2002.

³⁰⁴⁸ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2001: Rwanda*, Washington, D.C., March 4, 2002, 549-50, Section 6d [cited December 18, 2002]; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/af/8398.htm>.

³⁰⁴⁹ Integrated Regional Information Networks, "Rwanda: Interview".

children have reportedly served as soldiers in several regional conflicts. Children have reportedly served in Rwanda's official paramilitary Local Defense Force and with forces opposing the Government of Rwanda.³⁰⁵⁰ Child soldiers have also been recruited by Rwandan-based groups engaged in combat against the governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Burundi.³⁰⁵¹ Rwandan army soldiers reportedly helped the Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD) abduct and forcibly recruit children to serve in the RCD armed forces in the DRC.³⁰⁵² Some children have reportedly joined the Rwandan army where they performed non-military tasks.³⁰⁵³

Primary education in Rwanda is compulsory from the ages of 7 to 12 years.³⁰⁵⁴ Families must pay fees to enroll their children in school, though fees are waived for orphans.³⁰⁵⁵ In 1998, the gross primary enrollment rate was 114.4 percent, and the net primary enrollment rate was 90.9 percent.³⁰⁵⁶ According to UNICEF, almost one-third of Rwanda's 700,000 children have little or no access to quality and equitable education.³⁰⁵⁷ Of the children who enter the first grade, 76 percent reach the fifth grade.³⁰⁵⁸ There is a high dropout and repetition rate among primary school children.³⁰⁵⁹ Public schools lack basic supplies and cannot accommodate all primary age school children, and private schools are inaccessible or too costly for the majority of the population.³⁰⁶⁰ Attendance rates are not available for Rwanda. While enrollment rates indicate a level of commitment to education, they do not always reflect children's participation in school.³⁰⁶¹

³⁰⁵⁰ Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, "Rwanda," in *Global Report 2001*, 2001, [cited November 21, 2002]; available from <http://www.child-soldiers.org>. The rebel Rwandan Liberation Army (ALIR) reportedly had several hundred child soldiers in their ranks, some of whom served in combat. See Human Rights Watch, "Rwanda: Human Rights Developments," in *World Report 2002*, 2002, [cited October 10, 2002]; available from <http://www.hrw.org/wr2k2/africa9.html#developments>.

³⁰⁵¹ Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, "Rwanda." Human Rights Watch, "World Report 2002: Rwanda."

³⁰⁵² Human Rights Watch, "World Report 2002: Rwanda."

³⁰⁵³ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Rwanda*, 548-49, Section 5.

³⁰⁵⁴ Government of Rwanda: Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, *Enquete à Indicateurs Multiples (MICS2) Rapport Preliminaire: Rwanda*, Kigali, January 11, 2001, 8.

³⁰⁵⁵ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Rwanda*, 548-49, Section 5.

³⁰⁵⁶ World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2002*.

³⁰⁵⁷ Integrated Regional Information Networks, "Rwanda: UNICEF Lays Out Humanitarian Action Plan For 2002", [online], November 29, 2001 [cited December 18, 2002]; available from http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=16535&SelectRegion=Great_Lakes&SelectCountry=RWANDA.

³⁰⁵⁸ Government of Rwanda: Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, *Enquete à Indicateurs Multiples (MICS2)*, 8.

³⁰⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

³⁰⁶⁰ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Rwanda*, 548-49, Section 5.

³⁰⁶¹ For a more detailed discussion on the relationship between education statistics and work, see the preface to this report.

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The minimum age for full-time employment is 18 years and 14 years for apprenticeships if the child has completed primary school.³⁰⁶² Children under 18 cannot work without permission from parents or guardians and may not work at night.³⁰⁶³ Neither forced nor bonded labor by children, nor trafficking, is specifically prohibited.³⁰⁶⁴ Under Article 374 of the Criminal Code, trafficking is an aggravated offense, with a doubled penalty for delivering a minor into prostitution upon entering or exiting the country.³⁰⁶⁵ Legislation from 1977 sets the minimum voluntary age for military service at age 16.³⁰⁶⁶ The Ministry of Public Service and Labor does not effectively enforce these laws in part because of the large number of children who are heads of household.³⁰⁶⁷

The Government of Rwanda ratified ILO Convention 138 on April 15, 1981, and ILO Convention 182 on May 23, 2000.³⁰⁶⁸

³⁰⁶² U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Rwanda*, 549-50, Section 6d.

³⁰⁶³ Ibid.

³⁰⁶⁴ Ibid. See also Human Rights Internet (HRI), "Rwanda: Thematic Reports," in *For the Record 2000: The United Nations Human Rights System*, 2000, [cited December 18, 2002]; available from <http://www.hri.ca/fortherecord2000/vol2/rwandatr.htm>.

³⁰⁶⁵ According to the Protection Project, prostitution and compelling another person to become engaged in prostitution are prohibited by Articles 363-365 of the Criminal Code. Punishment for these crimes is imprisonment for up to 5 years and a fine. Protection Project, "Rwanda," in *Human Rights Report on Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children*, 2002, [cited December 18, 2002]; available from <http://209.190.246.239/ver2/cr/Rwanda.pdf>.

³⁰⁶⁶ Global March Against Child Labor, *The Worst Forms of Child Labour: Rwanda*, [online] [cited December 18, 2002]; available from <http://www.globalmarch.org/worstformsreport/world/rwanda.html>.

³⁰⁶⁷ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Rwanda*, 549-50, Section 6d.

³⁰⁶⁸ ILO, *Ratifications by Country*, in ILOLEX, [database online] [cited October 21, 2002]; available from <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/newratframeE.htm>.