Sierra Leone

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

The African Development Bank and the Islamic Development Bank are assisting Sierra Leone to construct 600 new primary schools and furnish them with textbooks, furniture and other needed equipment.[3223] The World Bank has announced a USD 20 million program to help Sierra Leone's schools meet basic standards, develop partnerships between government, communities and schools, and build up the capacity of the Ministry of Youth Education and Sports to deliver educational services.[3224] The Minister of Education, Science and Technology has stated that the national government will also pay the fees for the National Primary School Exams and the Basic Education Certificate Education exams, and has pledged to reduce the cost of textbooks by 60 percent.[3225] UNICEF is engaged in projects to renovate schools, distribute teaching material and equipment, retrain teachers, and promote girls' education.[3226]

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

In 2000, UNICEF estimated that 72 percent of children ages 5 to 14 years in Sierra Leone were working.[3227] Teenage prostitution has reportedly become a significant problem as a result of

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[3223] Big Ben, "Science and Technology Minister, Dr. Alpha Tejan Wurle- On the Subject of Literacy," *Sierra Leone Live*, July 25, 2002, [cited October 9, 2002]; available from http://www.sierraleonelive.com/news/templates/education.asp?articleid=215&zoneid=15.

[3224] World Bank, *Sierra Leone- Rehabilitation of Basic Education Project*, Washington, D.C., May 1, 2002, [cited October 9, 2002]; available from http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2002/03/23//000094946_02032204180890/Rendered/INDEX/multi0page.txt.

[3225] Big Ben, "Science and Technology Minister."

[3226] UNICEF, *Sierra Leone: Donor Update*, May 29, 2002, [cited August 9, 2002]; available from http://www.unicef.org/emerg/Country/SierraLeone/020529.PDF. See also Integrated Regional Information Networks, "Sierra Leone: Army Recruits Trained in Child Protection", [online], November 3, 2000, UNICEF, *Girls' Education in Sierra Leone*, [online] [cited October 9, 2002]; available from http://www.unicef.org.programme/girlseducation/action/cases/sierra_leone.htm.

[3227] Children who are working in some capacity include children who have performed any paid or unpaid work for someone who is not a member of the household, who have performed more than four hours of housekeeping chores in the household, or who have performed other family work. The survey estimated that 2 percent of children between 5 and 14 perform paid work, while 48 percent of children in Sierra Leone perform unpaid work for someone other than a household member. Government of Sierra Leone, *The Status of Women and Children in Sierra Leone: A Household Survey Report (MICS-2)*, November 2000, 60; available from http://www.childinfo.org/MICS2/newreports/sierraleone/sierraleone.PDF. In 2000, the ILO estimated that 13.9 percent of children between the ages of 10 and 14 were working in Sierra Leone. See World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2002* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2002. Most of this is domestic work such as cooking, shopping, cleaning, washing clothes, fetching water, and caring for children. See Government of Sierra Leone, *The Status of Women and Children in Sierra Leone*, 14.

migration from rural areas to Freetown and other urban areas during the war.[3228] Other children in Sierra Leone work on a seasonal basis on family subsistence farms, in family businesses and as petty vendors.[3229]

Over 5,000 children served on both sides of Sierra Leone's 10-year civil war.[3230] Between July 1999 and January 2002, 5,596 of the 45,844 ex-combatants demobilized were children.[3231] Most child soldiers served the rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and other military groups, which forced children into their ranks and made them serve as soldiers, as sexual slaves, or diamonds miners.[3232] Child soldiers forced into military service by the RUF were required to engage in combat, massacres and other acts of brutality.[3233] In May 2001, following reconciliation talks between the Government of Sierra Leone and the RUF, the RUF began to release child soldiers,[3234] though some may remain in captivity.[3235] Evidence suggests that the pro-government militia, the Civil Defense Force, continued to accept some children as volunteer soldiers.[3236] Rebel forces continue to kidnap and conscript children to augment their armies, though the number of cases is believed to be declining.[3237] In some cases, rebel fighters compelled these children to commit atrocities involving family members.[3238] The rebels reportedly released a disproportionate numbers of boys, indicating that many girls may continue to be held as sex slaves.[3239]

[3228] Swedish International Development Agency, *Looking Back, Thinking Forward: The Fourth Report on the Implementation of the Agenda for Action Adopted at the First World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Stockholm, Sweden, 28 August 1996*, ECPAT International, 2000, [cited October 28, 2001]; available from http://www.ecpat.net/Blueboo2000/index.html.

[3229] U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2001: Sierra Leone*, Washington, D.C., March 4, 2002, 584-86, Section 6c [cited December 20, 2002]; available from http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/af/8402.htm.

[3230] In 2000, the ILO estimated that 5,400 children served as soldiers. See "Sierra Leone: The Terrible Price of Poverty and Unemployment," *World of Work* 33 (February 2000), [cited October 17, 2001]; available from http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/inf/magazine/33/sleone.htm. Human rights groups estimate that 4,500-10,000 children under 16 years of age were forcibly abducted into military service during the war. See Douglas Farah, "Children Forced to Kill," *Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.), April 10, 2000. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Sierra Leone*, 584-86, Section 6c.

[3231] Government of Sierra Leone, Letter of Intent to the International Monetary Fund, February 12, 2002.

[3232] U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Sierra Leone*, 584-86, Section 6c. See also Douglas Farah, "Rebels in Sierra Leone Mine Diamonds in Defiance of UN: Captured Children and Conscripts Used as Laborers," *Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.), August 19, 2001, [cited December 18, 2002]; available from http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn?pagename=article&node=&contentId=A30720-2001Aug18&notFound=true.

[3233] Farah, "Children Forced to Kill."

[3234] UNICEF, *UNICEF Encouraged by the Release Today of 150 Child Soldiers in Sierra Leone*, [press release] 2001 [cited October 17, 2001]; available from http://www.unicef.org/newsline/01prjune4cs.htm.

[3235] Many of the former child combatants suffer from poor health, AIDS, and drug addiction. See "Sierra Leone: The Terrible Price."

[3236] U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Sierra Leone*, 583-84, Section 5.

[3237] Ibid.

[3238] Ibid.

[3239] Ibid.

The law requires mandatory primary school education, but a shortage of schools has made implementation impossible.[3240] Even before the war, the educational system was capable of serving only 45 percent of primary school-age children.[3241] According to the IMF, the civil war resulted in the destruction of 1,270 primary schools. According to UNICEF, 67 percent of all school age children are currently out of school.[3242] The Government of Sierra Leone has introduced free primary education.[3243] In 1996, the gross primary enrollment rate was 51.7.[3244] Primary school attendance rates are unavailable for Sierra Leone. While enrollment rates indicate a level of commitment to education, they do not always reflect children's participation in school.[3245]

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The minimum age for employment in Sierra Leone is 18 years, although children between the ages of 12 and 18 years may be employed in some non-hazardous occupations with the consent of their parents. The law is not enforced in practice, as there is no government agency charged with enforcement.[3246] The Constitution prohibits forced and bonded labor, including that performed by children. Under the Chiefdom's Council Act, however, individual chiefs may impose compulsory labor and may require village members to work to improve common areas.[3247] This practice exists only in rural areas.[3248]

The Government of Sierra Leone has not ratified ILO Convention 138 or ILO Convention 182.[3249]

[3240] Ibid. See also U.S. Committee for Refugees, *Upheaval in Liberia /Repatriation to Sierra Leone: Findings and Recommendations*, ReliefWeb, 2002, [cited December 18, 2002]; available from http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf/6686f45896f15dbc852567ae00530132/00ae14f14bee696485256c02005a9794?OpenDocument.

[3241] UNICEF, *Girls' Education in Sierra Leone*.

[3242] Republic of Sierra Leone, *Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper*, Freetown, June 2001, [cited October 18, 2001]; available from http://www.imf.org/external/np/prsp/2001/sle/01/063101.pdf.

[3243] President and Commander-in-Chief of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces His Excellency Alhaji Dr. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, Inaugural Address On the Occasion of the State Opening of the First Session of the First Parliament of the Third Republic, July 12, 2002, [cited December 18, 2002]; available from http://www.sierra-leone.org/kabbah071202.html. See also Government of Sierra Leone, Letter of Intent and Memorandum of Economic and Financial Policies to the International Monetary Fund, August 12, 2002.

[3244] World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2002*.

[3245] For a more detailed description on the relationship between education statistics and work, see the preface to this report.

[3246] U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Sierra Leone*, 584-86, Section 6d.

[3247] Ibid., 584-86, Section 6c.

[3248] Ibid.

[3249] ILO, *Ratifications by Country*, in ILOLEX, [database online], [cited December 18, 2002]; available from http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/newratframeE.htm.