

Papua New Guinea

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

The ILO estimated that 16.4 percent of children ages 10 to 14 years in Papua New Guinea were working in 2002.³¹²⁷ Children work as domestic servants,³¹²⁸ in subsistence agriculture, and in family-related businesses.³¹²⁹ Children are also victims of commercial sexual exploitation.³¹³⁰

Education is not compulsory or free in Papua New Guinea.³¹³¹ In 2001, both the gross primary enrollment rate and the net primary enrollment rate were approximately 77 percent.³¹³² Gross and net enrollment ratios are based on the number of students formally registered in primary school and therefore do not necessarily reflect actual school attendance. Recent primary school attendance statistics are not available for Papua New Guinea. In rural areas, the lack of access to schools reportedly contributes to low enrollment.³¹³³

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Employment Act sets the minimum age for employment at 18 years, but children ages 11 to 18 may work in family businesses with parental permission, medical clearance, and a work permit from the labor office.³¹³⁴ The Constitution prohibits forced labor.³¹³⁵ The Criminal Code prohibits procuring, luring, or

³¹²⁷ World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2004* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2004.

³¹²⁸ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Consideration of Reports Submitted By States Parties Under Article 44 of the Convention, Concluding Observations: Papua New Guinea*, CRC/C/15/Add.229, February 26, 2004, para. 57.

³¹²⁹ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2003: Papua New Guinea*, Washington, D.C., February 25, 2004, Section 6d; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2003/27785.htm>. There have been reports that children work in the commercial agriculture sector, including on tea and coffee farms. See Pacific Islands Report, *Child Labor Claimed at PNG Highlands Tea and Coffee Plantations*, Post-Courier/PINA Nius Online, [online] 2000 [cited July 9, 2003]; available from <http://166.122.164.43/archive/2000/March/03-23-14.htm>.

³¹³⁰ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Consideration of Reports: Papua New Guinea*, para. 59. See also ECPAT International, *Papua New Guinea*, ECPAT, [database online] 2003 [cited May 28, 2004]; available from http://www.ecpat.net/eng/Ecpat_inter/projects/monitoring/online_database/index.asp. The commercial sex sector, while still relatively undeveloped, is expanding, particularly in urban areas. See John C. Caldwell and Geetha Isaac-Toua, *AIDS in Papua New Guinea: Situation in the Pacific* (Canberra: National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health of Australian National University, 2002), 104-11. There is very limited information on trafficking in Papua New Guinea. While it does not appear to be a problem (i.e. there was no evidence of trafficking during 2002), there is a concern that the country may be used as a route for trafficking to Australia. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Papua New Guinea*, Section 6f.

³¹³¹ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Summary Record (Partial) of the 934th Meeting: Papua New Guinea*, CRC/C/SR.934, January 2004, para. 4; available from <http://www.unhcr.ch>. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Papua New Guinea*, Section 5.

³¹³² World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2004*.

³¹³³ ADB, *Millennium Development Goals in the Pacific: Relevance and Progress*, March 2003, 25; available from http://www.adb.org/documents/books/MDG_Pacific/mdg.pdf. Children may have to spend several hours a day walking to and from school. See also UNICEF, *Real Lives: An Identity for Joe's Booboo - Birth Registration in Papua New Guinea*, [online] October 7, 2002 [cited May 28, 2004]; available from http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/papuang_1612.html.

³¹³⁴ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Papua New Guinea*, Section 6d.

³¹³⁵ *Constitution of the Independent State of New Guinea*; available from http://www.vanuatu.usp.ac.fj/Paclawmat/PNG_legislation/Constitution.htm.

abducting women or girls for sexual relations or for confinement in a brothel.³¹³⁶ Information on the enforcement of child labor legislation is not available.³¹³⁷

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

The Government of Papua New Guinea has a “National Child Protection Service” to combat the commercial sexual exploitation of children.³¹³⁸ UNICEF, with the support of the government, is also implementing a child protection program that includes advocacy for the elimination of the worst forms of child labor, with a particular focus on commercial sexual exploitation. In addition, UNICEF is working to promote girls’ access to basic education through education reform activities and awareness-raising about the value of schooling.³¹³⁹ The Government of Papua New Guinea is implementing education sector reforms aimed at increasing children’s access to education.³¹⁴⁰ AusAID currently supports government reform efforts through basic education projects that aim to improve teacher training, building and renovating classrooms, providing equipment and textbooks, and promoting teaching in local languages.³¹⁴¹

Selected Child Labor Measures Adopted by Governments	
Ratified ILO Convention 138 6/02/2000	✓
Ratified ILO Convention 182 6/02/2000	✓
ILO-IPEC Member	
National Plan for Children	
National Child Labor Action Plan	
Sector Action Plan	

³¹³⁶ The section on abduction specifies that this applies to girls under the age of 18. See *Papua New Guinea Criminal Code*, as cited in The Protection Project Legal Library, [database online], Chapter 262, Sections 18-21; available from <http://209.190.246.239/protectionproject/statutesPDF/PapuaNewGuineaF.pdf>.

³¹³⁷ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Papua New Guinea*, Section 6d.

³¹³⁸ ECPAT International, *Papua New Guinea*. See also UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Consideration of Reports: Papua New Guinea*, para. 59.

³¹³⁹ UNICEF, *At A Glance: Papua New Guinea*, [online] 2004 [cited May 28, 2004]; available from <http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/papuang.html>.

³¹⁴⁰ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Press Document: Committee on Rights of the Child Considers Initial Report of Papua New Guinea*, [online] 2004 [cited February 10, 2004]; available from <http://www.unog.ch/news2/documents/newsen/crc04009e.htm>.

³¹⁴¹ Australian Agency for International Development, *Australia and Papua New Guinea: Development Cooperation Program 2000-2003*, 2004, 17, 19; available from http://www.ausaid.gov.au/publications/pdf/australia_png.pdf.