São Tomé and Principe

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

UNICEF estimated that 19.8 percent of children ages 5 to 14 years in São Tomé and Principe were working in 2000. Almost 5 percent of the working children within this age group perform domestic work for 4 or more hours per day, which may include such tasks as cooking, collecting water, and watching younger siblings. About 10 percent of children ages 5 to 14 work for their families in the streets, on commercial farms, or in other activities in the informal sector. From an early age, children reportedly work in subsistence agriculture, on plantations, and in informal commerce. Children also work in auto mechanic shops, cabinetry, and tailoring. There is little information about the commercial sexual exploitation of children in the country, but the government anticipates that, with the increase in tourism, the establishment of tax-free zones, oil exploration, and increased migration to São Tomé, children are at risk of such exploitation.

Education is free, universal, and compulsory through the sixth grade. Although education is compulsory through the sixth grade, many children work in the absence of educational opportunities beyond the fourth grade. Buying books and uniforms is the responsibility of the family, but the government provides assistance to those who cannot afford them. In 2001, the gross primary enrollment

---

3527 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. See Government of São Tomé and Príncipe, Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2000 - São Tomé and Príncipe, UNICEF, 2000, 64; available from http://www.childinfo.org/MICS2/newreports/saotome/STPtables.pdf.

3528 Ibid.


3530 Ibid. The largest percentage of child workers from this group is found in Principe (18 percent) and in the north (15 percent).


rate was 126.5 percent. Gross enrollment ratios are based on the number of students formally registered in primary school and therefore do not necessarily reflect actual school attendance. Primary school attendance statistics are not available for São Tomé and Principe.

Class time is insufficient because of a triple-shift system, which designates shifts of 4 hours. In reality, students attend between 2 and 3 hours of class time per day. The educational system suffers from poorly-trained and underpaid teachers, a shortage of classrooms, inadequate textbooks and materials, high rates of repetition, poor educational planning and management, and a lack of community involvement in school management. Only about 78 percent of children who enter first grade reach fourth grade and 52 percent reach eighth grade. Coordination among government ministries on education issues is poor, and a lack of domestic funding for the school system leaves the system highly dependent on foreign assistance.

**Child Labor Laws and Enforcement**

The minimum age for employment of a child is 16 years as established by national legislation. The law applies to commercial agriculture and export processing zones but not to family-owned or -operated farms and enterprises, domestic services, or light work. It is illegal for children under 18 years to work at night, more than 7 hours per day, or more than 35 hours per week. The Penal Code prohibits the commercial

---

3537 World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2004* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2004. For an explanation of gross primary enrollment and/or attendance rates that are greater than 100 percent, please see the definitions of gross primary enrollment rate and gross primary attendance rate in the glossary of this report.


3540 World Bank, *São Tomé and Principe- Social Sector Support*.


3544 ILO, *Review of Annual Reports*, Part II.

sexual exploitation of children. There have been few prosecutions.\footnote{ECPAT International, \textit{S\~{a}o Tom\~{e} and Principe}. While there have been few cases involving child exploitation, it has been noted that the exploitation of children for financial gain is believed to be on the rise. See UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, \textit{Initial Reports of State Parties: Sao Tome and Principe}, para. 405.} Forced and bonded labor, including by children, is prohibited and not known to exist.\footnote{U.S. Department of State, \textit{Country Reports- 2003: \textit{S\~{a}o Tom\~{e} and Pr	extipa{i}ncipe}}, Section 6c.}  

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


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selected Child Labor Measures Adopted by Governments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ratified Convention 138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratified Convention 182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO-IPEC Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Plan for Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Child Labor Action Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sector Action Plan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\footnote{ECPAT International, \textit{S\~{a}o Tom\~{e} and Principe}. While there have been few cases involving child exploitation, it has been noted that the exploitation of children for financial gain is believed to be on the rise. See UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, \textit{Initial Reports of State Parties: Sao Tome and Principe}, para. 405.}