

²³⁹⁸ U.S. Embassy- Bamako, reporting, January 7, 2009 - 16:36, para 8.

²³⁹⁹ ILO-IPEC Geneva official, E-mail communication to USDOL official, December 18, 2008. See also ILO-IPEC official, E-mail communication to USDOL official, February 27, 2008.

²⁴⁰⁰ ILO-IPEC, *Tackle Child Labor through Education: Moving Children from Work to School in 11 Countries*, Geneva, 2008; available from <http://www.ilo.org/ipceinfo/product/viewProduct.do?productId=8511>.

See also ILO-IPEC Geneva official, E-mail communication, December 18, 2008.

Mauritania

Selected Statistics and Indicators on Child Labor²⁴⁰¹

Population, children, 5-14 years:	-
Working children, 5-14 years (%):	-
Working boys, 5-14 years (%):	-
Working girls, 5-14 years (%):	-
Working children by sector, 5-14 years (%):	
- Agriculture	-
- Manufacturing	-
- Services	-
- Other	-
Minimum age for work:	14
Compulsory education age:	14
Free public education:	Yes*
Gross primary enrollment rate (%), 2007:	103.2
Net primary enrollment rate (%), 2007:	80.4
School attendance, children 5-14 years (%):	-
Survival rate to grade 5 (%), 2006:	63.7
ILO Convention 138:	12/3/2001
ILO Convention 182:	12/3/2001
CRC:	5/16/1991
CRCOPAC:	No
CRCOPSC:	4/23/2007**
Palermo:	7/22/2005**
ILO-IPEC participating country:	No

*In practice, must pay for various school expenses

**Accession

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

In rural areas in Mauritania, children frequently work with their families in activities such as farming (e.g., rice, beans, and vegetables), herding (e.g., goats), and fishing. Children also burn wood to produce charcoal.²⁴⁰² Children perform a

wide range of urban informal activities in cities such as Nouakchott, Nouadhibou, Kiffa, and Rosso, including domestic labor, street vending, and driving donkey carts to collect garbage and deliver water and construction materials.²⁴⁰³

Girls between the ages of 7 and 13 years sell fish, vegetables, and other items in markets and at bus stands, and most work more than 8 hours a day.²⁴⁰⁴ Boys between the ages of 14 and 18 years cart and transport people and goods, and many work more than 8 hours a day, 6 days a week.²⁴⁰⁵ Boys who work as apprentices to mechanics are as young as 7 years; many of these boys work more than 8 hours a day, 6 days a week. Some boy apprentices are beaten and forced to work for many years by their master.²⁴⁰⁶

Girls, many of whom are between the ages of 7 and 12 years, work as domestic servants in urban households for more than 10 hours a day. Many girls work without pay and some are beaten and sexually abused.²⁴⁰⁷ Many domestic servants in Mauritania come from the Senegal River Valley and Assaba and work in Nouakchott.²⁴⁰⁸ The USDOS estimates that there are 400 street children.²⁴⁰⁹ These children work on the streets in cities such as Nouakchott, Nouadhibou, and Rosso; many are boys around the age of 14 years. Some are former *talibes*. Also, some street children are sexually exploited, including by tourists.²⁴¹⁰

The practice of sending boys to Koranic teachers to receive education, which may include a vocational or apprenticeship component, is a tradition in various countries, including Mauritania.²⁴¹¹ The majority of boy students, or *talibes*, are between the ages of 6 and 10 years and

come from the Pulaar tribes of southern Mauritania.²⁴¹² Many religious leaders, or *marabouts*, provide the boys with lessons. However, some *marabouts* force the *talibes* to beg for more than 12 hours a day without adequate food or shelter.²⁴¹³ Some *talibes* suffer severe beatings by their *marabout* if they fail to produce sufficient profit from their begging activities.²⁴¹⁴

Historically, the practices of slavery and indentured servitude have been utilized in Sahelian communities. In Mauritania, children continue to be exploited in slave-like practices in remote areas of the country, including places where the economy persists on traditional labor and barter arrangements.²⁴¹⁵ These children are engaged in activities such as animal husbandry and herding (e.g., with goats, camels, and other animals).²⁴¹⁶

Mauritania is a source and destination country for trafficked children.²⁴¹⁷ Reports indicate that children are trafficked within Mauritania for forced labor in agriculture, construction, herding, domestic labor, and fishing.²⁴¹⁸ Specifically, children are trafficked by street gang leaders for selling drugs and stealing; girls for domestic labor and sexual exploitation; and *talibes* for forced begging.²⁴¹⁹ *Talibes* are trafficked from Senegal, Mali, Guinea, and Guinea-Bissau to Mauritania for forced begging.²⁴²⁰ Girls are trafficked to Mauritania from Senegal and Mali for domestic service.²⁴²¹ Reports indicate that Mauritanian girls are also trafficked to the Gulf States for domestic labor and commercial sexual exploitation.²⁴²²

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The law sets the minimum age for employment at 14 years. If the child has not completed the 9 years of compulsory education, the minimum working age may be raised.²⁴²³ At 12 years, children may perform light work in establishments where their family members are employed, provided that they have the Ministry of Labor's authorization and maintain their schooling. However, 12-year-olds may not work more than 2 hours a day, with the total combined hours of school and work not to exceed 7 hours a day, and the work must not be harmful to their normal development.²⁴²⁴ Children under 14 years may not work on Fridays or public holidays, and

children under 16 years are prohibited from night work.²⁴²⁵ The law also bans children under 18 years from work that is beyond their strength or is likely to harm their safety, health, or morals.²⁴²⁶ Employers must maintain a registry of employed youths under 18 years, including the hours worked.²⁴²⁷ Violation of Mauritania's child labor laws may result in a prison sentence of 15 days to 1 month and/or a fine.²⁴²⁸ In addition, if the child's health or schooling is compromised, the offense is punishable by a fine and 3 months to 1 year imprisonment.²⁴²⁹

Mauritanian law defines the worst forms of child labor as all forms of slavery and exploitive work; work exceeding the physical capacity of a child or considered degrading; work connected to trafficking in children; and activities requiring children to handle chemicals or dangerous materials; work on Fridays or holidays; and work outside the country.²⁴³⁰ If the child is found to be engaged in a worst form of child labor, the punishment is a fine and 3 to 6 months imprisonment.²⁴³¹ In addition, the law establishes penalties for sexual exploitation of a child, ranging from fines to imprisonment for 10 years.²⁴³²

Forced and compulsory labor, as well as enslaving and trafficking in persons are prohibited by law.²⁴³³ The law states that inciting a child to beg is punishable by a fine and imprisonment for 1 to 6 months. Further, the crime of giving authority to another person for a child, where the child is subsequently incited to beg, is punishable by a fine and imprisonment for 8 months.²⁴³⁴ The penalty for child trafficking is 5 to 10 years imprisonment and a fine.²⁴³⁵ The minimum age for both voluntary and compulsory recruitment into the military is 18 years.²⁴³⁶

The Labor Inspectorate has 30 labor inspectors and shares responsibility for following up on child labor violations. According to USDOS, the Government of Mauritania lacks sufficient resources to enforce child labor laws.²⁴³⁷ However, according to USDOS, the Government has made some enforcement efforts by establishing courts to pursue trafficking cases and launching a police brigade to investigate child trafficking.²⁴³⁸

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

The Government of Mauritania continued to participate in a USD 2.7 million program to return and reintegrate child camel jockeys to their home countries, funded by the United Arab Emirates and implemented by UNICEF.²⁴³⁹ Phase I of the project ended in February of 2009 and assisted 412 children.²⁴⁴⁰

In May 2008, the Government of Mauritania, with support from UNICEF held a child trafficking training for judges and law enforcement officials in an effort to raise awareness on the issue.²⁴⁴¹ In February 2008, the Government funded and implemented a country-wide campaign to raise awareness on slavery and trafficking laws. The Ministry of Justice, Human Rights Commission, and NGOs participated in the awareness-raising campaign.²⁴⁴²

²⁴⁰¹ For statistical data not cited here, see the Data Sources and Definitions section. For ratifications and ILO-IPEC membership, see the Introduction. For minimum age for admission to work, see Government of Mauritania, *Code du travail*, Loi No. 2004-017, (July 2004), article 153; available from http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex_browse.detail?s?p_lang=en&p_country=MRT&p_classification=01.02&p_origin=COUNTRY&p_sortby=SORTBY_COUNTR Y. For age to which education is compulsory, see Government of Mauritania, *Loi n° 2001-054 du portant obligation de l'enseignement*, (July 19, 2001), article 1. For free public education, see U.S. Department of State, "Mauritania," in *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2008*, Washington, DC, 2009, section 5; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2008/index.htm>.

²⁴⁰² U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2008: Mauritania," section 6d. See also U.S. Embassy-Nouakchott, *reporting, November 30, 2007*, para 11. See also Haimoud Ramdan, *La lutte contre la Précarité des Enfants en Mauritanie*, Université de Nouakchott, n.d., 17. See also Le Quotidien de Nouakchott official, Interview with USDOL consultant, May 15, 2008, 65. See also Maye Haidy, *A Situational Analysis of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Mauritania*, ECPAT International, March 2003, 6.

²⁴⁰³ U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2008: Mauritania," section 6d. See also U.S. Embassy-Nouakchott, *reporting, November 30, 2007*, para 11. See also Ministère de la Promotion de la Femme de l'enfant

et de la Famille official, Interview with USDOL consultant, March 5, 2008, 3. See also Ministère de la Promotion de la Femme de l'enfant et de la Famille official, Interview with USDOL consultant, May 18, 2008, 91. See also Maye Haidy, *A Situational Analysis of Commercial Sexual Exploitation*, 6.

²⁴⁰⁴ Bechir Fall, *Enquete sur le Travail des Enfants et Opportunités d'Insertion a Nouakchott-Version Provisoire*, Ministry of Public Works and Employment and UNICEF, December 2006, 14, 17.

²⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 24, 27-28.

²⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 29-30, 33. See also SOS-Esclaves official, Interview with USDOL consultant, May 8, 2008, 13.

²⁴⁰⁷ U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2008: Mauritania," section 6d. See also Maye Haidy, *A Situational Analysis of Commercial Sexual Exploitation*, 8. See also Bechir Fall, *Enquete sur le Travail des Enfants et Opportunités d'Insertion a Nouakchott*, 19-20.

²⁴⁰⁸ Ministère de la Justice official, Interview with USDOL consultant, May 7, 2008, 27.

²⁴⁰⁹ U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2008: Mauritania," section 5.

²⁴¹⁰ Maye Haidy, *A Situational Analysis of Commercial Sexual Exploitation*, 4, 6, 8, 10. See also Haimoud Dr. Ramdan, *La lutte contre la Précarité des Enfants en Mauritanie*, Université de Nouakchott, n.d., 4, 7.

²⁴¹¹ Peter Easton, Mark Peach, Ibrahima L. Bah, Elhadj B. Doumboula, and Mohammed L. Barry, *Research Studies Series no. 8*, International Working Group on Nonformal Education of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa, May 1997; available from <http://www.adeanet.org/wgnfe/publications/abel/abel2.html> [hard copy on file]. See also Peter Easton, "Education and Koranic Literacy in West Africa," *IK Notes*, no. 11 (August 1999), 1, 3; available from <http://www.worldbank.org/afr/ik/iknt11.pdf>.

²⁴¹² U.S. Embassy- Nouakchott, *reporting*, November 30, 2007, para 13. See also Ba Samba Hamady, *Rapport Narratif de l'enquête Participative sur la Situation des « almuube » à Nouakchott* Association Enfants et Développement en Mauritanie, Save The Children, Comunidad de Madrid, November 2006, 12.

²⁴¹³ U.S. Embassy-Nouakchott, *reporting, November 30, 2007*, para 12. See also U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2008: Mauritania," sections 5 and 6d. See also Maye Haidy, *A Situational Analysis of Commercial Sexual Exploitation*, 7-8.

²⁴¹⁴ U.S. Embassy-Nouakchott, *reporting, November 30, 2007*, para 12. See also U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2008: Mauritania," sections 5 and 6d. See also Maye Haidy, *A Situational Analysis of Commercial Sexual Exploitation*, 7-8. See also Ba Samba Hamady, *Rapport Narratif de l'enquête Participative sur la Situation des « almuube »*, 19.

²⁴¹⁵ U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2008: Mauritania," section 6c. See also ILO, *A Global Alliance Against Forced Labor*, Geneva, 2005, 42; available from <http://www.ilo.org>.

²⁴¹⁶ MACRO International Research Consultant, E-mail communication with USDOL consultant, February 17, 2009, 3.

²⁴¹⁷ U.S. Department of State, "Mauritania (Tier 2)," in *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2008*, Washington, DC, June 4, 2008; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2008>.

²⁴¹⁸ Ibid. See also Association Enfants Developpement en Mauritanie (AEDM) official, Interview with USDOL consultant, May 12, 2008, 53. See also U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2008: Mauritania," section 5.

²⁴¹⁹ U.S. Department of State, "Trafficking in Persons Report- 2008: Mauritania."

²⁴²⁰ Ibid. See also Ba Samba Hamady, *Rapport Narratif de l'enquête Participative sur la Situation des « almuube »*, 12. See also Association Enfants Developpement en Mauritanie (AEDM) official, Interview, AEDM, May 12, 2008, 53.

²⁴²¹ U.S. Department of State, "Trafficking in Persons Report- 2008: Mauritania."

²⁴²² U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2008: Mauritania," section 5.

²⁴²³ Government of Mauritania, *Code du travail*, article 153. See also Government of Mauritania, *Loi portant obligation de l'enseignement*, article 1.

²⁴²⁴ Government of Mauritania, *Code du travail*, articles 153 and 154.

²⁴²⁵ Ibid., articles 155 and 164.

²⁴²⁶ Ibid., article 247. See also ILO NATLEX National Labor Law Database, *Arreté no. 239 du 17 septembere 1954*, accessed October 11, 2006; available from http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex_browse.detail?s?p_lang=en&p_country=MRT&p_classification=04&p_origin=COUNTRY&p_sortby=SORTBY_COUNTRY.

²⁴²⁷ Government of Mauritania, *Code du travail*, article 156.

²⁴²⁸ Ibid., articles 449-450.

²⁴²⁹ Government of Mauritania, *Ordonnance 2005-015 portant protection penale de l'enfant*, (December 5, 2005), article 62.

²⁴³⁰ U.S. Embassy- Nouakchott, *reporting*, August 18, 2004.

²⁴³¹ Government of Mauritania, *Protection penale de l'enfant*, article 62.

²⁴³² Ibid., articles 24-27.

²⁴³³ Government of Mauritania, *Code du travail*, article 5. See also ILO Committee of Experts, *Direct Request, Worst Forms of Child Labor Convention*, 1999 (No. 182) *Mauritania (ratification: 2001)*, [online] 2005 [cited December 16, 2008]; available from <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/newcountryframeE.htm>. See also Government of Mauritania, *Loi n° 2007-048 portant incrimination de l'esclavage et réprimant les pratiques esclavagistes*, (December 17, 2007), articles 1-3; available from <http://appablog.wordpress.com/2008/01/24/mauritanie-texte-de-la-loi-anti-esclavagiste-adoptee-par-les-deputes-mauritaniens/>. See also Government of Mauritania, *Loi n° 025/3003 portant repression de la traite des personnes*, (2003), articles 1-3.

²⁴³⁴ Government of Mauritania, *Protection penale de l'enfant*, 42.

²⁴³⁵ ILO Committee of Experts, *Direct Request, C182: Mauritania*. See also Government of Mauritania, *Loi portant incrimination de l'esclavage* article 4.

²⁴³⁶ Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers. "Mauritania", in *Child Soldiers Global Report 2008*, London, 2008; available from <http://www.child-soldiers.org/home>.

²⁴³⁷ U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2008: Mauritania," section 6d.

²⁴³⁸ U.S. Department of State, "Trafficking in Persons Report- 2008: Mauritania."

²⁴³⁹ UNICEF, *Starting Over: Children Return Home from Camel Racing*, 2006, 5-6, 12-13; available from <http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/files/StartingOver.pdf>. See also UNICEF, *UAE Supports UNICEF in Safe Return of Camel Jockeys to Home Countries*, May 8, 2005; available from http://www.unicef.org/media/media_26692.html.

See also Prepared by Brahim A. Isselmou UNICEF, "Supporting the Repatriation of Child Camel Jockeys in Mauritania", UNICEF, [online], June 25, 2007 [cited January 21, 2009]; available from http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/mauritania_40103.html?q=printme. See also UNICEF official, Interview with USDOL consultant, May 11, 2008, 49. See also Ministère de l'Emploi de l'insertion et de la Formation Professionnelle, Interview with USDOL consultant, May 19, 2008, 87.

²⁴⁴⁰ U.S. Embassy- Nouakchott official, e-mail communication to USDOL official, June 29, 2009.

²⁴⁴¹ U.S. Embassy- Nouakchott, *reporting*, February 22, 2009, para 5b.

²⁴⁴² U.S. Department of State, "Trafficking in Persons Report- 2008: Mauritania."