

Guinea-Bissau

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

The Government of Guinea-Bissau has noted that child labor occurs and is harmful to the development of those involved, but states that it lacks the resources or mechanisms to adequately address the problem.¹⁶⁴⁷ Small-scale child labor initiatives that focus on literacy, education alternatives and technical training are being implemented by NGOs.¹⁶⁴⁸

The government is implementing a basic education project, called “FIRKIDJA,” which is designed to improve both access to schools and the quality of education, promote girls’ schooling, and strengthen educational management.¹⁶⁴⁹ The World Bank is one of the organizations assisting the Ministry of Education to achieve these goals through a USD 14.3 million Basic Education Support loan project.¹⁶⁵⁰ In addition, UNICEF is supporting the government with a program focusing on promoting female literacy and girls’ access to education in one targeted region of the country.¹⁶⁵¹

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

In 2000, UNICEF estimated that 65.4 percent of children ages 5 to 14 years in Guinea-Bissau were working.¹⁶⁵² Children work in street trading, farming, and domestic labor.¹⁶⁵³ According to the

¹⁶⁴⁷ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Initial reports of States parties due in 1992, Guinea-Bissau*, CRC/C/3/Add.63, prepared by Government of Guinea-Bissau, pursuant to Article 44 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, July 26, 2001, para. 139-42.

¹⁶⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, para. 252.

¹⁶⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, para. 29.

¹⁶⁵⁰ World Bank, *Basic Education Support Project, World Bank Project Data*, [cited August 28, 2002]; available from <http://www4.worldbank.org/sprojects/Project.asp?pid=P001015>.

¹⁶⁵¹ UNICEF, *Girls’ Education in Guinea Bissau*, [cited August 28, 2002]; available from http://www.unicef.org/programme/girlseducation/action/cases/guinea_bissau.htm.

¹⁶⁵² In the 2000 study, 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 house-keeping chores in the household, or who have performed other family work. It was estimated that 5.1 percent of children ages 5 to 14 engage in paid work; 9.7 percent participate in unpaid work for someone other than a household member; and, overall, 65.4 percent of children are working in some capacity. Government of Guinea-Bissau, *Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS): Guinea-Bissau*, UNICEF, December 2000, [cited August 28, 2002]; available from www.childinfo.org/MICS2/newreports/guineabissau/guineabissau.PDF. See also Government of Guinea-Bissau, *Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2: Guinea Bissau*, UNICEF, 2000, [cited August 28, 2002]; available from <http://www.ucw-project.org/resources/index.html>.

¹⁶⁵³ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2001: Guinea-Bissau*, Washington, D.C., March 4, 2002, 355-57 [cited August 28, 2002]; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/af/8385.htm>.

government, the number of children working in the informal sector – often in difficult or dangerous conditions – is increasing considerably.¹⁶⁵⁴ In addition, commercial sexual exploitation of children occurs, but the extent of the problem is unknown.¹⁶⁵⁵ Children were reported to be involved in the recent civil war in Guinea-Bissau.¹⁶⁵⁶

Education is compulsory from the age of 7 to 13 years.¹⁶⁵⁷ In 1998, the gross primary enrollment rate was 53.5 percent, with a higher enrollment rate for males (67.7 percent) compared to females (40 percent).¹⁶⁵⁸ The number of classrooms and schools is insufficient, particularly in rural areas where the majority of the population resides. According to UNICEF, 25 percent of rural schools offer only two grades, and 50 percent offer only four grades.¹⁶⁵⁹ Girls face additional challenges to receiving an education, as they are often kept home to assist with domestic work, encouraged to marry at an early age,¹⁶⁶⁰ and banned from schools when pregnant.¹⁶⁶¹

Guinea-Bissau is continuing to recover from the civil conflict in 1998 and 1999, which displaced one-third of the population, destroyed many schools, and prevented most young children from attending school for at least half a year.¹⁶⁶²

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The General Labor Law sets the minimum age for employment at 14 years for factory work and 18 years for heavy or dangerous labor, including work in mines.¹⁶⁶³ The law prohibits forced or bonded labor.¹⁶⁶⁴ There are no laws that specifically prohibit the commercial sexual exploitation of children.¹⁶⁶⁵ The practice of prostitution for lucrative purposes is illegal in Guinea-Bissau, as is the

¹⁶⁵⁴ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Initial Reports of States Parties*, para. 250.

¹⁶⁵⁵ Prostitution among young people is reported to be reaching alarming proportions. *Ibid.*, para. 253.

¹⁶⁵⁶ Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, *Child Soldiers 1379 Report*, November 2002, 38, [cited November 11, 2002]; available from <http://www.child-soldiers.org/cs/childsoldiers.nsf/Display%20Message/CSC%20Publications?OpenDocument>. See also UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties Under Article 44 of the Convention: Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child: Guinea Bissau, CRC/C/15/Add.177*, Geneva, June 13, 2002, para. 48.

¹⁶⁵⁷ UNICEF, *Youth at the UN, Country Profiles on the Situation of Youth: Guinea-Bissau*, UNICEF, 2000 [cited August 8, 2002]; available from <http://esa.un.org/socdev/unyin/countrya.asp?countrycode=gw>.

¹⁶⁵⁸ Net enrollment statistics on Guinea-Bissau are not available. UNESCO, *Education for All (EFA) Year 2000 Assessment: Guinea-Bissau* [CD-ROM], Paris, 2000.

¹⁶⁵⁹ UNICEF, *Girls' Education in Guinea Bissau*.

¹⁶⁶⁰ *Ibid.* See also UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Initial Reports of States Parties*, para 33.

¹⁶⁶¹ UNICEF, *Girls' Education in Guinea Bissau*.

¹⁶⁶² UNICEF, *UNICEF's Humanitarian Response to Children, January - December 1999, Guinea-Bissau*, UNICEF, 11, [cited August 28, 2002]; available from www.unicef.org/cap/gbissau.pdf.

¹⁶⁶³ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Guinea-Bissau*, 355-57, Section 6d.

¹⁶⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 355-57, Section 6c.

¹⁶⁶⁵ ECPAT International, *Guinea-Bissau*, in ECPAT International, [database online] 2002 [cited August 28 2002], "CSEC Overview"; available from http://www.ecpat.net/eng/Ecpat_inter/projects/monitoring/online_database/index.asp.

use of violence, threats, or other coercive actions to transport individuals to foreign countries.¹⁶⁶⁶ According to Decree 20/83, boys under 16 years may volunteer for the armed forces, and all citizens between the ages of 18 and 25 must perform compulsory military service.¹⁶⁶⁷

The Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Civil Service and Labor are responsible for enforcing labor laws in the formal sector,¹⁶⁶⁸ but due to economic conditions, formal sector employment of any kind is virtually nonexistent.¹⁶⁶⁹ There is no information available on the enforcement of laws pertaining to trafficking or commercial sexual exploitation of children.

The Government of Guinea-Bissau has not ratified either ILO Convention 138 or ILO Convention 182.¹⁶⁷⁰

¹⁶⁶⁶ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Initial Reports of States Parties*, para. 259-61.

¹⁶⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, para. 137.

¹⁶⁶⁸ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Guinea-Bissau*, 355-57, Section 6d.

¹⁶⁶⁹ U.S. Embassy- Dakar, *unclassified telegram no. 3985*, December 2001.

¹⁶⁷⁰ ILO, *Ratifications by Country*, in ILOLEX, [database online] [cited August 28 2002]; available from <http://ilolex.ilo.ch:1567/english/newratframeE.htm>.