

Papua New Guinea

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

The Government of Papua New Guinea is reforming the country's educational system under the National Education Plan (NEP). The NEP promotes universal access to three years of elementary education, urges completion of six years of primary school and aims to increase the number of students who continue into secondary school.²⁷⁸⁸ The plan also intends to improve equity in enrollments between boys and girls and urban and rural inhabitants, as well as improve the quality of education.²⁷⁸⁹

The Australian Government is currently supporting 13 education projects on a range of issues, including teacher training, curriculum development, the improvement of facilities, and provision of educational materials.²⁷⁹⁰ The World Bank recently completed an Education Development Loan project that included the provision of textbooks in schools, increased educational opportunities for girls and strengthening of institutional management.²⁷⁹¹ The EU and the Governments of Japan, Germany and China also provide educational assistance.²⁷⁹²

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

In 2000, the ILO estimated that 17.2 percent of children ages 10 to 14 years in Papua New Guinea were working.²⁷⁹³ Child labor in the agricultural sector is a growing problem,²⁷⁹⁴ and there are

²⁷⁸⁸ The National Education Plan was developed in 1995 and 1996. The plan covers all sectors of the formal education system and introduces a new grade-level structure, under which elementary school covers a preparatory year plus grades one and two (at the village level, in the local language), primary covers grades three through eight, and secondary school grades 9 through 12. Voluntary Service Organization, *Education in Papua New Guinea*, [cited August 14, 2002], 11-13; available from <http://www.vso.org.uk/png/education.pdf>. The plan was updated in 1999. See UNESCO, *World Data on Education 2001- Papua New Guinea*, online, 2001, [cited September 5, 2002]; available from http://nt5.scbbs.com/cgi-bin/om_isapi.dll?clientID=406051&infobase=iwde.nf&softpage=PL_srchframe. See also Asian Development Bank, *Country Operational Strategy Study: Papua New Guinea*, online, March 1999, 5 [cited August 23, 2002]; available from <http://www.adb.org/Documents/COSSs/png.pdf>.

²⁷⁸⁹ UNESCO, *World Data on Education 2001*.

²⁷⁹⁰ Australian Agency for International Development, *Papua New Guinea, Program Profiles 2001-2002*, 2002, [cited September 5, 2002]; available from http://www.ausaid.gov.au/publications/pdf/png/png_program_profiles_2001_02.pdf.

²⁷⁹¹ The project closed on December 31, 2001. World Bank, *Educational Development Project*, online, [cited August 23, 2002]; available from <http://www4.worldbank.org/sprojects/Project.asp?pid=P004392>.

²⁷⁹² UNESCO, *World Data on Education 2001*.

²⁷⁹³ World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2002* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2002.

²⁷⁹⁴ WTO General Council Review of the Trade Policies of Papua New Guinea, *Internationally Recognized Core Labor Standards in Papua New Guinea*, prepared by International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), November 15 and 17, 1999, [cited December 30, 2002]; available from <http://www.icftu.org/displaydocument.asp?Index=991209325&Language=EN>.

allegations that children under 12 years old are employed on commercial tea and coffee farms.²⁷⁹⁵ Although it is not reported to be widespread, children are said to be involved in commercial sexual exploitation.²⁷⁹⁶ It is unknown whether the use of child soldiers continues to be a problem, but children under 18 years of age fought with the Bougainville Revolutionary Army, an armed opposition group, during the secessionist war in the late 1990s.²⁷⁹⁷

Education is not compulsory or free in Papua New Guinea.²⁷⁹⁸ In 1998, the gross primary enrollment rate was 84.9 percent, with 78.4 percent of girls enrolled as opposed to 91.2 percent of boys.²⁷⁹⁹ Primary school attendance rates are unavailable for Papua New Guinea. While enrollment rates indicate a level of commitment to education, they do not always reflect children's participation in school.²⁸⁰⁰ Primary school dropout rates are high, particularly in rural areas, and only 59 percent of children complete primary school.²⁸⁰¹

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Employment Act establishes 18 as the minimum age for employment, but children between the ages of 11 and 18 can work in family businesses with parental permission, a medical clearance and a work permit from the labor office.²⁸⁰² The Constitution prohibits forced labor.²⁸⁰³ The

²⁷⁹⁵ Pacific Islands Report, *Child Labor Claimed at PNG Highlands Tea and Coffee Plantations*, Post-Courier/PINA Nius Online, [online] 2000 [cited August 27, 2002]; available from <http://166.122.164.43/archive/2000/March/03-23-14.htm>.

²⁷⁹⁶ There are also allegations of men selling their young female relatives to work as prostitutes. 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, Bangkok, 2000, Section 7.1. 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.

²⁷⁹⁷ Children under 18 years of age fought in the ranks of the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA), and children as young as 13 and 14 years old were reportedly recruited. The BRA has since announced that it will review its recruitment policies and refrain from admitting children under 18 years old. Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, "Papua New Guinea," in *Global Report 2001*, [cited September 30, 2002]; available from <http://www.child-soldiers.org/cs/childsoldiers.nsf/f30d86b5e33403a180256ae500381213/d3fd060bf388329f80256ae6002426d7?OpenDocument>.

²⁷⁹⁸ Voluntary Service Organization, *Education in Papua New Guinea*.

²⁷⁹⁹ World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2002*.

²⁸⁰⁰ For a more detailed discussion on the relationship between education statistics and work, see the preface to this report.

²⁸⁰¹ Asian Development Bank, *Country Operational Strategy Study*, 5.

²⁸⁰² Information on the enforcement of child labor legislation is not available. U. S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices-2001: Papua New Guinea*, Washington, D.C., March 4, 2002, 1131-32, Section 6d [cited December 20, 2002]; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/eap/8368.htm>.

²⁸⁰³ *Constitution of the Independent State of New Guinea*, [cited August 26, 2002]; available from http://www.vanuatu.usp.ac.fj/Paclawmat/PNG_legislation/Constitution.htm.

Summary Offences Act bans child prostitution, and the Criminal Code prohibits procuring, luring or abducting women or girls for sexual relations.²⁸⁰⁴

The Government of Papua New Guinea ratified both ILO Convention 138 and ILO Convention 182 on June 2, 2000.²⁸⁰⁵

²⁸⁰⁴ *Papua New Guinea Criminal Code*, Chapter 262, no. 218 [cited August 19, 2002]; available from <http://209.190.246.239/protectionproject/statutesPDF/PapuaNewGuineaF.pdf>.

²⁸⁰⁵ ILO, *Ratifications by Country*, in ILOLEX, [database online], [cited August 26, 2002]; available from <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/newratframeE.htm>.