

Guinea-Bissau

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

UNICEF estimated that 65.4 percent of children ages 5 to 14 years in Guinea-Bissau were working in 2000.¹⁸⁷⁹ Children work in street trading, farming, and domestic labor.¹⁸⁸⁰ For four months, during the annual cashew harvest, children are withdrawn in part or completely from school in order to work in the fields.¹⁸⁸¹ In addition, commercial sexual exploitation of children occurs, but the extent of the problem is unknown.¹⁸⁸²

Education is compulsory from the age of 7 to 13 years.¹⁸⁸³ In 1999, the gross primary enrollment rate was 69.7 percent, with a higher enrollment rate for males (83.6 percent) than females (56.0 percent). In 1999, the net primary enrollment rate was 45.2 percent. Males had a higher net enrollment rate (52.9 percent) compared with females (37.5 percent).¹⁸⁸⁴ 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 Guinea-Bissau. In 2003, the majority of school-age children were unable to receive schooling due to prolonged strikes in state-run schools.¹⁸⁸⁵ The resulting school closures led to a shut-down of 75 percent of the school system.¹⁸⁸⁶ In general, access to education is extremely low. There is a shortage of qualified teachers.¹⁸⁸⁷ There is also an insufficient number of classrooms and schools, particularly in rural areas where the majority of the population resides. According to UNICEF, 25 percent of rural schools offer only 2 grades, and 50 percent offer only 4 grades.¹⁸⁸⁸ Girls face additional challenges to receiving an education, as they are often kept

¹⁸⁷⁹ 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. It was estimated that 5.1 percent of children between ages 5 and 14 engage in paid work; 9.7 percent participate in unpaid work for someone other than a household member. See Government of Guinea-Bissau, *Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS): Guinea-Bissau*, UNICEF, December 2000; available from <http://www.childinfo.org/MICS2/newreports/guineabissau/Guinne%20Bissau~2.pdf>.

¹⁸⁸⁰ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2003: Guinea-Bissau*, Washington, D.C., February 25, 2004, Section 6d; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2003/27732.htm>.

¹⁸⁸¹ U.S. Embassy- Dakar, *unclassified telegram no. 2129*, August 2003.

¹⁸⁸² Prostitution among young people was reported to be reaching alarming proportions. See 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. 253.

¹⁸⁸³ UNICEF, *Youth at the UN, Country Profiles on the Situation of Youth: Guinea-Bissau*, UNICEF, 2000 [cited June 19, 2003]; available from <http://esa.un.org/socdev/ynyin/countrya.asp?countrycode=gw>.

¹⁸⁸⁴ World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2004* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2004.

¹⁸⁸⁵ U.S. Embassy- Dakar, *unclassified telegram no. 2129*.

¹⁸⁸⁶ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Guinea-Bissau*, Section 5.

¹⁸⁸⁷ World Food Program, *Food Aid for Rehabilitation in Guinea-Bissau, Project Document*, [cited May 28, 2004], para. 18; available from <http://www.wfp.org/index.asp?section=5>.

¹⁸⁸⁸ UNICEF, *Girls' Education in Guinea Bissau*, [cited June 19, 2003], [hard copy on file]; available from <http://www.unicef.org/girlseducation/Bissaufinal.pdf>.

home to assist with domestic work, encouraged to marry at an early age,¹⁸⁸⁹ and prevented from attending school when pregnant.¹⁸⁹⁰

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The minimum age for employment is set at 14 years for factory work and 18 years for heavy or dangerous labor, including work in mines.¹⁸⁹¹ The law prohibits forced or bonded labor.¹⁸⁹² The practice of prostitution is illegal in Guinea-Bissau, as are the use of violence, threats, or other coercive actions to transport individuals to foreign countries.¹⁸⁹³ In order to prevent trafficking, the law requires that an individual responsible for a child traveling overseas submit identification documents (birth certificates) to relevant authorities.¹⁸⁹⁴ According to Decree 20/83, boys under 16 years may volunteer for the armed forces with the consent of their parents/guardians, and all citizens between the ages of 18 and 25 are subject to compulsory military service.¹⁸⁹⁵

According to the U.S. Department of State, formal sector employers typically adhere to the minimum age requirements, but child labor occurred in the informal sector without oversight or enforcement by the Ministry of Justice or the Ministry of Civil Service and Labor.¹⁸⁹⁶ There is no information available on the enforcement of laws pertaining to trafficking or commercial sexual exploitation of children.

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

The Government of Guinea-Bissau developed a Strategic Document for the Reduction of Poverty that includes the elimination of the worst forms of child labor as a key objective.¹⁸⁹⁷ Small-scale initiatives that focus on children's literacy, education alternatives, and technical training are being implemented by NGOs.¹⁸⁹⁸

During the past year, the World Bank provided a USD 2.5 million loan to pay teachers 10 months of salary arrears in order to re-open schools.¹⁸⁹⁹ The World Bank is

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

¹⁸⁸⁹ Ibid. See also UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Initial Reports of States Parties*, para 33.

¹⁸⁹⁰ UNICEF, *Girls' Education in Guinea Bissau*.

¹⁸⁹¹ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Guinea-Bissau*, Section 6d.

¹⁸⁹² Ibid., Section 6c.

¹⁸⁹³ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Initial Reports of States Parties*, para. 259.

¹⁸⁹⁴ Ibid., para. 176.

¹⁸⁹⁵ Ibid., para. 137.

¹⁸⁹⁶ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Guinea-Bissau*, Section 6d.

¹⁸⁹⁷ U.S. Embassy- Dakar, *unclassified telegram no. 1798*, August 2004.

¹⁸⁹⁸ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Initial Reports of States Parties*, para. 252.

¹⁸⁹⁹ Integrated Regional Information Networks, "Guinea-Bissau: Schools reopen, World Bank pays teachers", IRINnews.org, [online], October 29, 2003 [cited February 12, 2004]; available from <http://www.irinnews.org/print.asp?ReportID=37542>.

also assisting the Ministry of Education to strengthen the education sector through a 10-year, USD 14.3 million Basic Education Support loan project. The project is expected to end in 2010 and includes infrastructure development, government capacity-building, and improvements in the quality of education services, among other activities.¹⁹⁰⁰ In addition, UNICEF is implementing a program to promote access to education, particularly among girls.¹⁹⁰¹ The WFP is implementing a school feeding program aimed at improving school attendance, and is also promoting vocational training for youth.¹⁹⁰²

¹⁹⁰⁰ World Bank, *Basic Education Support Project*, *World Bank Project Data*, [cited May 28, 2004]; available from <http://web.worldbank.org/external/projects/main?pagePK=104231&piPK=73230&theSitePK=40941&menuPK=228424&Projectid=P001015>.

¹⁹⁰¹ UNICEF, *At a Glance: Guinea-Bissau*, [online] 2004 [cited May 28, 2004]; available from <http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/guineabissau.html>.

¹⁹⁰² World Food Program, *Current Operations: Protracted Relief and Recovery Operations*, [online] 2004 [cited May 28, 2004]; available from http://www.wfp.org/country_brief/indexcountry.asp?country=624.