

Guinea-Bissau

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

An estimated 62.2 percent of children ages 5 to 14 years were counted as working in Guinea-Bissau in 2000. Approximately 64.4 percent of all boys 5 to 14 were working compared to 64 percent of girls in the same age group.²¹⁵³ Children work in street trading, farming, and domestic labor.²¹⁵⁴ For four months, during the annual cashew harvest, children are withdrawn in part or completely from school in order to work in the fields.²¹⁵⁵ In addition, commercial sexual exploitation of children occurs, but the extent of the problem is unknown.²¹⁵⁶

School attendance is compulsory for six years. The government is obligated to cover all costs for the first four of these years.²¹⁵⁷ In 2000, the gross primary enrollment rate was 70 percent and the net primary enrollment rate was 45 percent.²¹⁵⁸ 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. In 2000, 37.3 percent of children ages 5 to 14 years were attending school.²¹⁵⁹ During the 2004-2005 school year, teacher strikes over unpaid wages plagued the education system.²¹⁶⁰ There is a shortage of qualified teachers and an insufficient number of classrooms and schools, particularly in rural areas where the majority of the population resides.²¹⁶¹ Girls face additional challenges to receiving an education, such as having to travel long distances in potentially unsafe conditions to get to school. Girls are also expected to assist with domestic work, compelled to marry at an early age, and prevented from attending school when pregnant.²¹⁶²

²¹⁵³ UCW analysis of ILO SIMPOC, UNICEF MICS, and World Bank surveys, *Child Economic Activity and School Attendance Rates*, October 7, 2005. Reliable data on the worst forms of child labor are especially difficult to collect given the often hidden or illegal nature of the worst forms, such as the use of children in the illegal drug trade, prostitution, pornography, and trafficking. As a result, statistics and information on children's work in general are reported in this section. Such statistics and information may or may not include the worst forms of child labor. For more information on the definition of working children and other indicators used in this report, please see the section in the front of the report titled "Data Sources and Definitions."

²¹⁵⁴ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2004: Guinea-Bissau*, Washington, DC, February 28, 2005, Section 6d; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2004/41608.htm>.

²¹⁵⁵ U.S. Embassy- Dakar, *reporting*, August 2, 2004, para 2.

²¹⁵⁶ ECPAT International, *Guinea-Bissau CSEC Overview*, ECPAT International, [online database] 2005 [cited September 28, 2005]; available from http://www.ecpat.net/eng/Ecpat_inter/projects/monitoring/online_database/index.asp. See also 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. See also U.S. Embassy- Dakar, *reporting*, August 2, 2004, para 1.

²¹⁵⁷ U.S. Embassy- Dakar official, email communication to USDOL official, August 14, 2006.

²¹⁵⁸ UNESCO Institute for Statistics, <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/TableViewer/tableView.aspx?ReportId=51> (Gross and Net Enrolment Ratios, Primary; accessed December 2005).

²¹⁵⁹ UCW analysis of ILO SIMPOC, UNICEF MICS, and World Bank surveys, *Child Economic Activity and School Attendance Rates*.

²¹⁶⁰ U.S. Embassy Guinea-Bissau, email communication to USDOL official, December 27, 2005.

²¹⁶¹ This project closed in 2005. See World Food Program, *Post Conflict Relief and Rehabilitation in Guinea Bissau*, [online] 2004 [cited June 15, 2005], 3; available from

http://www.wfp.org/operations/current_operations/countries/countryproject.asp?section=5&sub_section=7&country=624.

See also UNICEF, *Girls' Education in Guinea Bissau*, [cited June 29, 2005]; available from

[http://www.unicef.org/girlseducation/files/Guinea-Bissau_2003_\(w.corrections\).doc](http://www.unicef.org/girlseducation/files/Guinea-Bissau_2003_(w.corrections).doc).

²¹⁶² UNICEF, *Girls' Education in Guinea Bissau*. See also UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Initial Reports of States Parties*, para 33.

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The worst forms of child labor may be prosecuted under different statutes in Guinea-Bissau. 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.²¹⁶³ The law prohibits forced or compulsory labor by children.²¹⁶⁴ Prostitution is illegal in Guinea-Bissau, as is the use of violence, threats, or other coercive actions to transport individuals to foreign countries.²¹⁶⁵ The practices of selling, trafficking, and kidnapping of children are also criminal offenses.²¹⁶⁶ In order to prevent trafficking, the law requires that persons traveling with children outside of the country submit their personal identification documents; as well as the identification documents of the child's parents or the child.²¹⁶⁷ According to Decree 20/83, boys under 16 years may volunteer for the armed forces with the consent of their parents/tutors, and all citizens aged 18 to 25 years are subject to compulsory military service.²¹⁶⁸

According to the U.S. Department of State, although age requirements are generally respected in the formal sector, child labor occurred in the informal sector without oversight or enforcement by the Ministries of Justice or Civil Service and Labor.²¹⁶⁹ 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 drafted a Strategic Document for the Reduction of Poverty in 2004 that includes the elimination of the worst forms of child labor as a key objective.²¹⁷⁰ The World Bank assisted the Ministry of Education in 2005 with strengthening the education sector through a 10-year, USD 14.3 million Basic Education Support loan project. Among other activities, the project included infrastructure development, government capacity-building, and improvements in the quality of education services.²¹⁷¹ In addition, the WFP implemented a school feeding program aimed at improving enrollment and attendance rates, especially for girls, in primary schools.²¹⁷²

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	

The UNICEF country program seeks to increase recognition of children's rights and ensure full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). It is also working to improve access

²¹⁶³ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Guinea-Bissau*, Section 6d.

²¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, Section 6c.

²¹⁶⁵ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Initial Reports of States Parties*, para. 259.

²¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, para. 263.

²¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, para. 176.

²¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, para. 137. See also Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, *Child Soldiers Global Report 2004*, London, March 2005, 72; available from http://www.child-soldiers.org/document_get.php?id=966.

²¹⁶⁹ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Guinea-Bissau*, Section 6d.

²¹⁷⁰ U.S. Embassy- Dakar, *reporting*, August 2, 2004, para 4.

²¹⁷¹ This project concluded in 2005. World Bank, *Basic Education Support Project, World Bank Project Data*, [cited June 29, 2005]; available from

<http://web.worldbank.org/external/projects/main?pagePK=104231&piPK=73230&theSitePK=40941&menuPK=228424&Projectid=P001015>.

²¹⁷² World Food Program, *WFP Current Operations*, para 36.

to quality basic education, particularly girls.²¹⁷³ Small-scale child labor initiatives that focus on literacy, education alternatives, and technical training are also being implemented by NGOs.²¹⁷⁴ The Adventist Development and Relief Agency has received support from USAID to build schools along the border with Senegal, where 7,000 to 8,000 Senegalese refugees live.²¹⁷⁵

²¹⁷³ UNICEF, *At a Glance: Guinea-Bissau*, [online] 2005 [cited June 9, 2005]; available from <http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/guineabissau.html>.

²¹⁷⁴ U.S. Embassy Guinea-Bissau, email communication, December 27, 2005.

²¹⁷⁵ Ibid.