

Gabon

<i>Selected Statistics and Indicators on Child Labor</i> ¹⁴³²	
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:	16
Compulsory education age:	16
Free public education:	Yes
Gross primary enrollment rate (%), 2004:	152.2
Net primary enrollment rate (%), 2001:	88.0
School attendance, children 5-14 years (%):	-
Survival rate to grade 5 (%), 2002:	69.3
ILO Convention 138:	No
ILO Convention 182:	3/28/2001
CRC:	2/9/1994
CRCOPAC:	No
CRCOPSC:	10/1/2007
Palermo:	No
ILO-IPEC participating country:	Yes

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

Children work in agriculture, farming cassava, taro, yams, and, to a lesser extent, coffee and cocoa. Some evidence suggests that these children harvest crops, apply chemicals without protective gear, and clear fields, including through the use of machetes.¹⁴³³ Children also work in animal husbandry, fishing, and mining.¹⁴³⁴

Gabon is primarily a destination country for children trafficked for forced labor from other African countries. Children are trafficked into the country from Benin, Nigeria, Togo, and Guinea and, to a lesser extent, Sierra Leone, Burkina Faso, and Cameroon.¹⁴³⁵ Past reports indicate that the majority of children working in Gabon are trafficking victims; nearly all trafficked children

are employed in the informal sector, with the majority engaging in domestic work.¹⁴³⁶

Girls, including trafficking victims from Togo, Benin, and Nigeria, work in domestic service, sometimes under forced labor conditions.¹⁴³⁷ Cases have been reported of girls in domestic service being forced to work for long hours with little food and being subjected to physical abuse.¹⁴³⁸ Girls, including trafficking victims from Togo and Nigeria, also engage in market vending and selling goods, sometimes under forced conditions.¹⁴³⁹ Girls are also trafficked to Gabon for forced labor in restaurants and commercial sexual exploitation.¹⁴⁴⁰ Boys, including child trafficking victims, are forced to work in small workshops and as street vendors.¹⁴⁴¹ Children trafficked from Nigeria are found working as mechanics.¹⁴⁴² Gabonese children are trafficked to Equatorial Guinea.¹⁴⁴³

Children trafficked to Gabon from other West African countries are typically from poor families, who believe their children will receive an education, opportunities, and wages for their work. While some children receive such benefits, many receive only rudimentary room and board, and wages are seldom paid either to them or their families.¹⁴⁴⁴

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The law sets the minimum age for employment at 16 years; however, younger children may be permitted to work with joint consent from the Ministries of Labor, Education, and Public Health. In addition, children between 14 and 16 years may work as apprentices with permission from the Ministry of National Education.¹⁴⁴⁵ The employment of children in jobs that are unsuitable for them because of their age, state, or condition, or that interfere with their education is also prohibited.¹⁴⁴⁶ A labor inspector can require a medical exam for children up to 18 years to confirm that the work does not exceed their capacity.¹⁴⁴⁷ Children under 16 years who have been removed from exploitive labor must be placed in appropriate reception or transit centers.

If they are of foreign nationality, the children must be repatriated to their country of origin at the expense of their guardian or employer.¹⁴⁴⁸ Children under 18 years are prohibited from working at night in industrial establishments, unless the establishment is exclusively run by family members. However, children over 16 years are permitted to work in certain industries that, by their nature, must be continued at night, such as sugar refineries and metalworks.¹⁴⁴⁹ The law imposes a fine for violations of minimum age laws and a larger fine, along with a prison term of 2 to 6 months for repeat violators.¹⁴⁵⁰

Gabonese law prohibits trafficking children for labor, forced labor, procuring a minor for prostitution, and forced prostitution.¹⁴⁵¹ Gabon's trafficking law outlines measures to protect children under 18 years from trafficking for labor and stipulates 5 to 15 years of imprisonment and a fine for perpetrators.¹⁴⁵² The penalty for imposing forced labor is imprisonment for 1 to 6 months and a fine, and recurring violations are punishable with imprisonment for 2 to 12 months and a heavier fine.¹⁴⁵³ Procurement of a minor under 18 years for the purpose of prostitution and forcing someone to engage in prostitution are both punishable by imprisonment for 2 to 5 years and a fine.¹⁴⁵⁴ Rape is punishable by 2 to 10 years of imprisonment and a fine.¹⁴⁵⁵ The minimum age for voluntary recruitment into the military is 20 years, and there is no conscription.¹⁴⁵⁶

The Ministry of Justice is responsible for the enforcement of child labor laws, while the Ministry of Labor is charged with receiving, investigating, and addressing child labor complaints.¹⁴⁵⁷ Minimum age laws are strictly enforced for the protection of Gabonese children in urban areas, but rarely in rural areas. Gabonese child labor laws also apply to foreign children residing in Gabon, but abuses are rarely reported.¹⁴⁵⁸ According to USDOS, the number of labor inspectors was inadequate, and child labor complaints were not routinely investigated.¹⁴⁵⁹

According to USDOS, the Government of Gabon's efforts to patrol its coastline and borders to prevent trafficking, investigate and prosecute trafficking cases, and assist trafficking victims were weak and hindered by a lack of resources.¹⁴⁶⁰ While the Government did make some

trafficking-related arrests during the reporting period, prosecutions were rare, and no convictions were reported during 2008.¹⁴⁶¹ According to the Ministry of Justice, some trafficking cases have languished because victims were repatriated before the traffickers were brought to trial. The Ministry of Justice continues to coordinate with other Government agencies to ensure that victims can stay in Gabon and receive proper care until cases can be prosecuted.¹⁴⁶²

Gabon was 1 of 24 countries to adopt the Multilateral Cooperation Agreement to Combat Trafficking in Persons and the Joint Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children in West and Central African Regions.¹⁴⁶³ As part of the regional Multilateral Cooperation Agreement to Combat Trafficking in Persons, the Government of Gabon agreed to investigate and prosecute trafficking offenders; to rehabilitate and reintegrate trafficking victims; and to assist fellow signatory countries to implement these measures under the Agreement.¹⁴⁶⁴

Current Government Efforts to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Gabon's UN Development Assistance Framework 2007-2011 includes the goal of bringing national legislation into alignment with the country's bilateral and regional agreements to combat child trafficking, as well as ILO Convention 182 and other international conventions that it has ratified.¹⁴⁶⁵

The Government's Inter-Ministerial Committee to Combat Trafficking, chaired by the Ministry of Labor, created a set of guidelines to standardize the Government's process for identifying trafficking victims, removing them from exploitive situations, providing them with temporary care, and repatriating them to their home countries. As of early 2009, the Committee was disseminating these guidelines to all relevant Government ministries and agencies throughout the country.¹⁴⁶⁶

The Government and UNICEF worked closely to increase collaboration between Gabon and several African countries known to be countries of origin for trafficking to Gabon to develop standard

procedures for removing foreign trafficking victims. As a result, Gabon and Benin recently finalized a bilateral agreement to repatriate trafficking victims and protect them from being re-trafficked.¹⁴⁶⁷ The Government of Gabon hosted a workshop in October 2008 to develop a strategy for implementing a UNICEF-supported ECOWAS/ECCAS joint action plan to combat child trafficking. The U.S. Government provided assistance to Gabon to increase country capacity to guard its coasts.¹⁴⁶⁸

The Government continued to operate three reception centers for children, including child trafficking victims; the Government fully funds one center and co-funds the other two. These centers, located in the capital of Libreville and Port Gentil, offer shelter, medical care, repatriation, rehabilitation, and reintegration services to children.¹⁴⁶⁹ The Government conducted campaigns in towns and cities outside Libreville to raise awareness of trafficking. In collaboration with UNICEF, the Government continues to fund and operate a toll-free hotline to assist child trafficking victims.¹⁴⁷⁰

¹⁴³² 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 Gabon, *Code du travail*, Loi no 3/94, (November 21, 1994), article 177; available from <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/WEBTEXT/39615/64948/F94GAB01.htm>. For age to which education is compulsory, see U.S. Department of State, "Gabon," in *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices-2008*, Washington, DC, February 25, 2009, section 6d; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2008>. For free public education, see UNESCO, *EFA: Global Monitoring Report 2009*, Paris, 2009, 298; available from <http://www.unesco.org/en/education/efareport/reports/2009-governance/>. See also Government of Gabon, *Key Indicators*, [online] [cited January 29, 2009]; available from <http://www.legabon.org/uk/indic.php?Id=2>.

¹⁴³³ U.S. Embassy- Libreville official, E-mail communication to USDOL official, July 11, 2008. See also U.S. Embassy- Libreville, *reporting*, June 19, 2008, para 3.

¹⁴³⁴ U.S. Embassy- Libreville, *reporting*, June 19, 2008, para 2.

¹⁴³⁵ U.S. Department of State, "Gabon (Tier 2 Watch List)," in *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2008*, Washington, DC, June 4, 2008; available from <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/105656.pdf>. See also Antoine Lawson, "Gabon cracks down on child trafficking," *Mail and Guardian*, February 26, 2005; available from <http://www.mg.co.za/article/2005-02-25-gabon-cracks-down-on-child-trafficking>. See also "Rights-Gabon: Hopefully, the Beginning of the End for Child Traffickers," *IPS.com*, February 24, 2005, 3; available from http://www.childtrafficking.org/cgi-bin/ct/main.sql?ID=1446&file=view_document.sql.

¹⁴³⁶ ILO Committee of Experts, *Individual Observation concerning Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No.182) Gabon (ratification: 2001)*, [online] June 20, 2006 [cited January 29, 2009]; available from <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/pdconv.pl?host=status01&textbase=iloeng&document=8875&chapter=6&query=%28Gabon%29+%40ref+%2B+%23YEAR%3E2003&highlight=&querytype=bold&context=0>.

¹⁴³⁷ Human Rights Watch, *Borderline Slavery*, New York, April 1, 2003, 1; available from www.hrw.org/en/reports/2003/04/01/borderline-slavery-0. See also UNODC, *Measures to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings in Benin, Nigeria, and Togo*, Vienna, September 2006, 12 and 30; available from http://www.unodc.org/pdf/human_trafficking/ht_research_report_nigeria.pdf. See also Anti-Slavery International, *Enfants Travailleurs Domestiques: Manuel sur La Bonne Pratique dans les Interventions*, London, 2005, 65; available from <http://www.antislavery.org/homepage/resources/Enfants%20travailleurs%20domestiques%20%20manuel%20sur%20la%20bonne%20pratique%20dans%20les%20interventions.pdf>. See also UNODC, *Trafficking in Persons: Global Patterns*, Vienna, April 2006, 67; available from http://www.unodc.org/pdf/traffickinginpersons_report_2006-04.pdf.

¹⁴³⁸ UNODC, *Trafficking in Persons: Global Patterns*, 67.

¹⁴³⁹ Human Rights Watch, *Borderline Slavery*, 1. See also UNODC, *Trafficking in Persons: Global Patterns*, 67. See also U.S. Department of State, "Trafficking in Persons Report- 2008: Gabon."

¹⁴⁴⁰ U.S. Department of State, "Trafficking in Persons Report- 2008: Gabon."

¹⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.* See also Integrated Regional Information Networks, "Gabon: Laws Fail to Curb Child Trafficking Racket", IRINnews.org [previously online] February 4, 2005; available from <http://irinnews.org/print.asp?ReportID=45400> [hard copy on file].

¹⁴⁴² UNESCO, *Global Monitoring Report 2009*, section 5.

¹⁴⁴³ U.S. Department of State, "Equatorial Guinea (Tier 2 Watch List)," in *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2008*,

Washington, DC, June 4, 2008; available from <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/105656.pdf>. See also Government of Equatorial Guinea, *Plan de Acción de Lucha Contra el Tráfico y la Trata de Niños 2005-2009*, 2005, 10.

¹⁴⁴⁴ Integrated Regional Information Networks, "Laws Fail to Curb Child Trafficking Racket".

¹⁴⁴⁵ Government of Gabon, *Code du travail*, articles 82 and 177.

¹⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, article 6.

¹⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, article 178.

¹⁴⁴⁸ ILO, *The Effective Abolition of Child Labour*, [previously online], 2003; available from <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/decl/download/review03/childlabour.pdf> [hard copy on file].

¹⁴⁴⁹ Government of Gabon, *Code du travail*, articles 167 and 168.

¹⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, article 195.

¹⁴⁵¹ U.S. Department of State, "Trafficking in Persons Report- 2008: Gabon." See also Government of Gabon, *Code du travail*, article 4.

¹⁴⁵² U.S. Department of State, "Trafficking in Persons Report- 2008: Gabon." See also ILO Committee of Experts, *Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) Gabon*, Observation, CEACR 2005/76th Session, Geneva, 2005; available from <http://webfusion.ilo.org/public/db/standards/normes/appl/appl-displaycomment.cfm?hdroff=1&ctry=2610&year=2005&type=O&conv=C182&lang=EN>.

¹⁴⁵³ Government of Gabon, *Code du travail*, articles 4 and 16.

¹⁴⁵⁴ Government of Gabon, *Procurement, Procurement of Minors, and Procurement with Coercion Code*, articles 260 and 261; available from www.protectionproject.org [hard copy on file]. See also U.S. Department of State, "Trafficking in Persons Report- 2008: Gabon."

¹⁴⁵⁵ U.S. Embassy- Libreville, *reporting*, February 24, 2009, paras 25B and D.

¹⁴⁵⁶ Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, "Gabon," in *Child Soldiers Global Report 2008*, London, 2008; available from <http://www.child-soldiers.org/library/global-reports>.

¹⁴⁵⁷ U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2008: Gabon," section 6d.

¹⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶⁰ U.S. Embassy- Libreville, *reporting*, February 24, 2009, paras 23D, 24A, 27B. See also U.S. Department of State, "Trafficking in Persons Report- 2008: Gabon."

¹⁴⁶¹ U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2008: Gabon," section 5. See also U.S. Embassy- Libreville, *reporting*, February 24, 2009, para 25E.

¹⁴⁶² U.S. Embassy- Libreville, *reporting*, February 24, 2009, para 25E.

¹⁴⁶³ Catholic Relief Services official, E-mail communication to USDOL official, October 2, 2006. See also ILO-IPEC, *Combating the Trafficking of Children for Labour Exploitation in West and Central Africa (LUTRENA)*, Technical Progress Report, Geneva, September 1, 2006.

¹⁴⁶⁴ ECOWAS and ECCAS, *Multilateral Cooperation Agreement to Combat Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, in West and Central Africa*, Abuja, July 7, 2006.

¹⁴⁶⁵ U.S. Embassy- Libreville, *reporting*, December 4, 2007, para 3.

¹⁴⁶⁶ U.S. Embassy- Libreville, *reporting*, February 24, 2009, paras 26F and 27C.

¹⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, para 25G.

¹⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, paras 23D and 24A.

¹⁴⁶⁹ U.S. Department of State, "Trafficking in Persons Report- 2008: Gabon."

¹⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

The Gambia

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

Children in The Gambia primarily work in the informal sector, engaging in street vending, domestic service, and agriculture.¹⁴⁷¹ Working girls engage in street vending, selling food items such as sweets, water, and fruits for their families.¹⁴⁷² Working boys are found hauling items, sweeping, and collecting fares.¹⁴⁷³ Children

in urban areas work as taxi or bus attendants. Children between 14 and 17 years work in technical sectors such as carpentry, sewing, tailoring, plumbing, masonry, and auto repair.¹⁴⁷⁴ Most working children in The Gambia work as part of family businesses, and very few are paid for their work. Children in rural areas are more likely to work than children in urban areas.¹⁴⁷⁵ Orphaned children are more likely to work than