

# Guinea-Bissau

The Government of Guinea-Bissau has made efforts to address trafficking of children through awareness-raising efforts and victim repatriation. However, children in the country continue to be exploited in the worst forms of child labor in the agriculture sector and through trafficking for forced begging. There are gaps in enforcement efforts and a lack of a comprehensive policy framework or sufficient programs to address the issue.



## Statistics on Working Children and School Attendance

Children	Age	Percent
Working	5-14 yrs.	47.3%
Attending School	5-14 yrs.	56.9%
Combining Work and School	7-14 yrs.	24.4%

## Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Children in Guinea-Bissau are exploited in the worst forms of child labor,<sup>2146</sup> many of them in agriculture. The rate of child work is highest in rural areas,<sup>2147</sup> where children perform farm work and cattle herding.<sup>2148</sup> For four months each year, during the annual cashew harvest, some children are partially or completely withdrawn from school to work in the fields.<sup>2149</sup> Children's work in agriculture commonly involves possibly harmful activities, such as using potentially dangerous machinery and tools, carrying heavy loads, and applying harmful pesticides.

In urban areas, many children work on the streets, shining shoes, washing cars, and selling various items.<sup>2150</sup> Street work makes children vulnerable to severe weather, traffic accidents and criminal elements. Children also work as apprentices in activities such as metalworking, mechanics, and carpentry,<sup>2151</sup> where they may use potentially dangerous machinery and tools and carry heavy loads. Some children work for other families as unpaid domestic servants.<sup>2152</sup> Child domestic workers may be subject to long hours, possibly harmful activities and physical and sexual exploitation by their employer.

In Guinea-Bissau it is traditional practice to send boys to stay with *marabouts* (an Islamic religious leader and teacher) to receive education at a Koranic school, which may include a vocational or apprenticeship component.<sup>2153</sup> Children attending such schools are known as *talibés* in the Wolof language or *almudus* in the Fula language, regardless of whether they live at home or are entrusted to *marabouts* in distant villages.<sup>2154</sup> Some children attend Koranic schools in Guinea-Bissau and others are sent abroad to Senegal and other neighboring countries. While some boys receive lessons, many are forced by their teachers to beg for money and food.<sup>2155</sup> Each child must present the teacher an established amount of money and may be beaten if he fails to do so.<sup>2156</sup> There have been reports of boys trafficked from the country to Senegal and to a lesser extent Mali and Guinea for forced begging.<sup>2157</sup>


Girls in Guinea-Bissau are sometimes exploited as prostitutes.<sup>2158</sup> Girls are also trafficked internally for commercial sexual exploitation in small bars and restaurants.<sup>2159</sup> Children, primarily boys, are trafficked within the country for begging and agricultural labor, including on cotton plantations. Children from the Bafata and Gabu regions of the country are also trafficked to Senegal, Mali, and Guinea.<sup>2160</sup>

### Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The minimum age for employment is 14. The Government prohibits children under 18 from engaging in heavy or dangerous labor, including work in mines,<sup>2161</sup> however it has not provided a comprehensive list of other hazardous occupations that are off limits for children. The Constitution prohibits forced labor, including by children;<sup>2162</sup> however, it is unclear whether this applies to forced begging.

There are laws against the removal of minors, rape, sexual abuse, and the kidnapping of minors.<sup>2163</sup> There are also laws against kidnapping which can be used to prosecute traffickers.<sup>2164</sup> There is also a statutory rape law that prohibits sex with someone under 16 years old.<sup>2165</sup> This law appears to leave 16 and 17 year old children without this legal protection.

Finally, Guinea-Bissau requires compulsory education only until age 12, two years before children are legally permitted to work. This makes 12 and 13-year-olds more vulnerable to involvement in worst forms of child labor.

	C138, Minimum Age	✓
	C182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
	CRC	✓
	CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	No
	CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography	✓
	Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓
	Minimum Age for Work	14
	Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	18
	Compulsory Education Age	12
	Free Public Education	Yes

### Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement

In 2008, the Ministry of Solidarity (MOS) formed a National Committee to Fight Against Trafficking in Persons (National Trafficking Committee). A separate anti-trafficking committee formed by the Ministry of Civil Service and Labor reportedly also met during the year.<sup>2166</sup> However, research has found no evidence of coordinating mechanisms to combat other worst forms of child labor.

The Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Civil Service and Labor, in collaboration with the Institute of Women and Children, enforce worst forms of child labor laws, including minimum age work requirements. There is no information indicating that any child labor inspections were undertaken by the Government of Guinea-Bissau during the reporting period.<sup>2167</sup>

The Ministry of Interior is responsible for efforts to reduce child trafficking.<sup>2168</sup> In 2009, there were reports that trafficking through official border crossings had decreased and that, as a result, police had stopped fewer children and only arrested two *marabouts*.<sup>2169</sup> There were no successful prosecutions in 2009.<sup>2170</sup> However published reports indicate that trafficking persisted. Traffickers with children crossed the border into Senegal at night, and at more secluded and unguarded crossing points.<sup>2171</sup> In some cases parents were found to have colluded with traffickers.<sup>2172</sup> Some of these children were repatriated and parents were required to sign a contract promising not to send their children away under penalty of jail. The Association of the Friends of Children (AMIC) monitored the agreement during 2009 through visits to the households of repatriated trafficked children.<sup>2173</sup>

Between April 2007 and March 2008, the Government of Guinea-Bissau, through its Embassy in Dakar and with the cooperation of the Government of Senegal, repatriated 43 children to Guinea-Bissau from Senegal. Also, police coordinated their repatriation efforts with NGOs and referred 160 victims to NGO providers of victim services.<sup>2174</sup>

## Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Research found no evidence of a national plan to combat the worst forms of child labor, including trafficking, nor have child labor issues been mainstreamed into broader development efforts. Furthermore, information was not identified to indicate that the government has conducted in-depth research concerning worst forms of child labor.

## Social Programs to Eliminate or Prevent the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Government officials have worked with the NGO, Association of the Friends of Children (AMIC) to combat trafficking through awareness raising and the repatriation of victims. The Government provides \$12,000 annually to AMIC, which runs the country's only trafficking shelter for victims in Gabu and conducts regular awareness programs.<sup>2175</sup> A regional \$5.2 million IPEC project to combat the worst forms of child labor, funded by Spain, includes Guinea-Bissau among its four countries.<sup>2176</sup> Government social programs to address the worst forms of child labor in Guinea-Bissau are limited in scope, given the extent of the worst forms of child labor

### Based on the reporting above, the following actions would advance the reduction of the worst forms of child labor in Guinea-Bissau:

#### IN THE AREA OF LAWS AND REGULATIONS:

- Amend the legal framework to protect children from all forms of possibly harmful work.
- Amend laws to provide protection to all minors against prostitution
- Enact and enforce legislation that criminalizes forced child begging for economic gain.
- Raise the age for compulsory education to 14.

#### IN THE AREA OF COORDINATION AND ENFORCEMENT:

- Collect and make publicly available information on investigations of the worst forms of child labor.
- Enforce the country's legal protections against the worst forms of child labor, including through labor inspection.
- Investigate and prosecute trafficking cases to ensure a focus on those engaged in parental deception and exploitation of children through forced begging.
- Establish a coordinating mechanism to combat all worst forms of child labor.

#### IN THE AREA OF POLICIES:

- Establish a comprehensive policy framework to address all worst forms of child labor.
- Support research to gain increased knowledge of the scope and magnitude of the worst forms of child labor in Guinea-Bissau.

#### IN THE AREA OF PROGRAMS:

- Step up government efforts to implement social programs to address the worst forms of child labor and provide adequate protection to child victims, particularly in agriculture.
- Undertake greater trafficking prevention efforts, such as public awareness campaigns targeting families of prospective *talibés*.

<sup>2146</sup> Data provided in the chart at the beginning of this country report are based on UCW analysis of ILO SIMPOC, UNICEF MICS, and World Bank surveys, *Child Economic Activity, School Attendance, and Combined Working and Studying Rates*, 2005-2010. Data on working children and school attendance are from 2006. Data on children combining working and schooling are from 2000. 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. As a result, statistics and information on children's work in general are reported in this section, which may or may not include the worst forms of child labor. For more information on sources used, the definition of working children, and other indicators used in this report, please see the "Children's Work and Education Statistics: Sources and Definitions" section of this report.

<sup>2147</sup> Ministry of Economy and UNICEF, *Guinée-Bissau: Enquete par Grappes a Indicateurs Multiples 2006*, June 2006; available from [http://www.childinfo.org/files/MICS3\\_GuineaBissau\\_FinalReport\\_2006\\_Fr.pdf](http://www.childinfo.org/files/MICS3_GuineaBissau_FinalReport_2006_Fr.pdf).

<sup>2148</sup> Guinea-Bissau PLAN International official, Interview with USDOL consultant, June 13, 2006, 56. See also U.S. Department of State, "Guinea-Bissau," 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/af/119006.htm>.

<sup>2149</sup> Ministry of Education official, Interview with USDOL consultant, June 14, 2006, 61. See also U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2008: Guinea-Bissau," section 6d.

<sup>2150</sup> U.S. Embassy- Dakar, *reporting*, September 28, 2007. See also African Young Workers and Children Movement representative, Interview with USDOL consultant, May 24, 2006, 2.

<sup>2151</sup> African Young Workers and Children Movement representative, Interview, May 24, 2006, 2. See also Network of Young Educators official, Interview with USDOL consultant, May 25, 2006, 6.

<sup>2152</sup> Cooperation and Development official, Interview with USDOL consultant, June 12, 2006, 52.

<sup>2153</sup> Peter Easton, Mark Peach, Ibrahima Lalya Bah, ElHadj Bella Doumboula, and Mohammed Lamine Barry, *Research Studies Series no. 8*, International Working Group on Nonformal Education of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa, May 1997; available from <http://www.adeanet.org/wgnfe/publications/abel/abel2.html>. See also Peter Easton, "Education and Koranic Literacy in West Africa," *IK Notes*, no. 11 (August 1999), 1 and 3; available from <http://www.worldbank.org/afrik/iknt11.pdf>. See also UNICEF, *Under the Facade of*

*Religious Study, Children Fall Victim to Trafficking*, July 9, 2007; available from [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/guineabissau\\_40282.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/guineabissau_40282.html).

<sup>2154</sup> UNICEF, *Child Trafficking in Guinea-Bissau, An Exploratory Study*, 2010.

<sup>2155</sup> Integrated Regional Information Networks, "Child trafficking on the decline say local authorities", IRINnews.org, [online], October 15, 2008 [cited February 10, 2009]; available from <http://www.irinnews.org/PrintReport.aspx?ReportId=80928>. See also UNICEF, *Under the Facade of Religious Study*. See also IOM, *Traditional Practices Being Abused to Exploit Children in West Africa, Warns IOM*, [online] 2006 [cited April 28, 2009]; available from <http://www.iom.int/jahia/Jahia/newsArticleAF/cache/offonce?entryId=12007>.

<sup>2156</sup> UNICEF, *Under the Facade of Religious Study*.

<sup>2157</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Guinea-Bissau (Tier 2 Watch List)," in *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2010*, Washington, DC, June 14, 2010, 163; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2010/index.htm>.

<sup>2158</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Guinea-Bissau," in *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2009*, Washington, DC, March 11, 2010, 8; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/af/135958.htm>.

<sup>2159</sup> U.S. Embassy- Dakar, "Guinea-Bissau," in *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2009*, 2009, 148; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2009/index.htm>.

<sup>2160</sup> Ibid. See also U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2008: Guinea-Bissau," section 5. See also Integrated Regional Information Networks, "Child trafficking on the decline say local authorities". See also Integrated Regional Information Networks, "On the Child Trafficking Route", IRINnews.org, [online], November 23, 2007 [cited February 10, 2009]; available from <http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?ReportID=75485>.

<sup>2161</sup> General Labor Inspectorate official, Interview with USDOL consultant, May 26, 2006. See also U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2008: Guinea-Bissau," section 6d.

<sup>2162</sup> Government of Guinea-Bissau, *Constitution of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau*, (1984), article 37; available from <http://www.icrc.org/ihl-nat.nsf/162d151af444ded44125673e00508141/8ff8cad34667b579c1257083002a6fa8!OpenDocument>. See also U.S. Department of State, "Guinea-Bissau (Tier 2 Watch List)," in *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2008*, Washington, DC, June 4, 2008, 149; available from <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/105656.pdf>.

<sup>2163</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2009: Guinea-Bissau."

<sup>2164</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports- 2008: Guinea-Bissau,” section 6d.

<sup>2165</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports- 2009: Guinea-Bissau.”

<sup>2166</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Trafficking in Persons Report- 2008: Guinea Bissau,” 149.

<sup>2167</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports- 2009: Guinea-Bissau,” section 6.

<sup>2168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2169</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Off the Backs of the Children*, April 15, 2010, 51; available from <http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2010/04/15/back-children?print>.

<sup>2170</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports- 2009: Guinea-Bissau,” section 6.

<sup>2171</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Off the backs of the Children*, 51.

<sup>2172</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports- 2009: Guinea-Bissau,” section 6.

<sup>2173</sup> U.S. Department of State (March 11, 2010). Guinea-Bissau. *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2009*. Washington, DC, section 6. See also UNICEF, *Child Trafficking in Guinea-Bissau*.

<sup>2174</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Trafficking in Persons Report- 2010: Guinea Bissau,” 164.

<sup>2175</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports- 2009: Guinea-Bissau,” section 6. See also U.S. Department of State, “Guinea-Bissau,” in *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2009*, 2009, 148; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2009/index.htm>.

<sup>2176</sup> ILO-IPEC official, E-mail communication, July 17, 2010.