

Guinea-Bissau

The Government of Guinea-Bissau is participating in programs to address child trafficking and develop greater capacity to combat the worst forms of child labor. However, the legal framework to protect children remains insufficient, and the Government has not adopted a national policy on child labor. Children continue to engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in agriculture and forced begging.



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.	34.6

Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of the Worst Forms of Child Labor²⁵⁵²

Children in Guinea-Bissau are engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including in agriculture and forced begging. In rural areas, where child labor is the most prevalent, children work on farms.²⁵⁵³ Though the extent of the problem is unknown, evidence suggests that, during the four-month annual cashew harvest, some children are partially or completely withdrawn from school to work in the fields.²⁵⁵⁴ Reportedly, children also herd cattle.²⁵⁵⁵ Children's work in agriculture may involve using dangerous machinery and tools, carrying heavy loads and applying harmful pesticides. Work with livestock may expose children to disease or injury.

In urban areas, many children work on the streets shining shoes, washing cars and vending goods.²⁵⁵⁶ Street work commonly involves exposure to severe weather, criminal elements and accidents caused by proximity to automobiles. Children engage in dangerous occupations, such as metalworking, mechanics and carpentry.²⁵⁵⁷ Children also work as domestic servants.²⁵⁵⁸ Child domestic workers

may be subject to long hours and vulnerability to physical and sexual exploitation by their employers. Some evidence suggests that a number of children involved in street work and domestic service are working under forced conditions.²⁵⁵⁹

In Guinea-Bissau, it is traditional practice to send boys to Koranic teachers, called *marabouts*, to receive education, which may include vocational training and apprenticeship. Students are known as *talibés* in Wolof or *almudus* in Fula.²⁵⁶⁰ Though many *marabouts* carry out the intended tradition of providing religious and moral education, others force students to beg on the streets for money and food and then surrender their earnings.²⁵⁶¹ *Marabouts* typically set a daily quota that *talibés* must meet or they will face beatings.²⁵⁶² On the streets, they work long hours and are vulnerable to car accidents, disease and severe weather, including scorching heat.²⁵⁶³ Forced begging among *talibés* is believed to have increased over the last five years, particularly in the capital city of Bissau.²⁵⁶⁴ Many boys are also trafficked to Koranic schools in neighboring countries, namely Senegal, where they are subjected to forced begging.²⁵⁶⁵

Evidence suggests that child prostitution occurs in the country’s urban areas.²⁵⁶⁶ Though the extent of the problem is unknown, children are trafficked internally and internationally to Senegal and other neighboring countries for domestic work and agricultural labor, including work on cotton plantations.²⁵⁶⁷

Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The General Labor Law sets the minimum age for employment at 14.²⁵⁶⁸ The Government prohibits children younger than age 18 from engaging in heavy or dangerous labor, including work in mines or for long hours.²⁵⁶⁹ However, the Government has not established a comprehensive list of hazardous occupations that are prohibited for children.

	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	14
	Free Public Education	Yes

The Constitution prohibits forced labor broadly.²⁵⁷⁰ However, forced begging is neither explicitly criminalized nor defined as a worst form of child labor in domestic laws.²⁵⁷¹

The law prohibits sexual exploitation of minors.²⁵⁷² During the reporting period, the Government drafted anti-trafficking legislation that would significantly improve protections for children. The law was passed on June 8, 2011, but it has not yet been enacted. Existing laws are used to prosecute child trafficking cases, such as laws against the removal, sexual exploitation and kidnapping of minors.²⁵⁷³

The minimum age for compulsory military recruitment is 18. However, children may voluntarily enter the military at age 16. Children younger than age 16 may enter with parental consent.²⁵⁷⁴

In March 2010, the Government passed a law increasing compulsory education attendance from sixth grade to ninth grade.²⁵⁷⁵ The law also affords free public education.²⁵⁷⁶ However, informal school fees, including inscription and monthly charges, are common in State schools.²⁵⁷⁷

Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement

The National Trafficking Committee is responsible for coordinating government initiatives to address human trafficking, including capacity-building efforts. The Committee, which meets quarterly, is led by the National Institute for Women and Children. Members include representatives from the Ministries of Interior, Justice, Health, Education and Transportation, as well as various NGOs.²⁵⁷⁸ Although there is a National Trafficking Committee, research found no evidence of a coordinating mechanism to combat other worst forms of child labor.

The Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Civil Service and Labor, in collaboration with the National Institute of Women and Children, enforce child labor laws, including minimum age work requirements. Research did not find evidence to indicate that any child labor inspections were conducted by the Government

of Guinea-Bissau during the reporting period.²⁵⁷⁹ Reportedly, police and court personnel do not have access to transport vehicles, which inhibits their ability to carry out investigations and prosecutions of child labor cases.²⁵⁸⁰

The Ministry of Interior leads efforts to reduce child trafficking.²⁵⁸¹ Police and border officials are tasked with preventing traffickers from entering or exiting the country with children. However, officials possess only one car and one motorcycle to monitor a 250-kilometer stretch of border.²⁵⁸² Local police maintain data on child trafficking victims intercepted at the border. There were no arrests related to child trafficking during the reporting period.²⁵⁸³

Research found no evidence that the Government tracks information on violations, inspections or prosecutions related to other worst forms of child labor.

Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Research found no evidence of any national policies to address child labor. However, in March 2011, Guinea-Bissau and other members of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking countries approved four target areas where they will focus efforts to combat child labor. These include the exchange of information and experiences, awareness-raising campaigns, use of statistical methodologies to collect child labor data and technical cooperation and training.²⁵⁸⁴

The Government has formulated a national action plan to integrate Koranic schools into the national education system, allowing for State oversight and regulation.²⁵⁸⁵ Research found no evidence that the plan has been adopted or implemented.

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

During the reporting period, the Government began participating in a USDOL-funded program

to combat the worst forms of child labor in five Lusophone countries in Africa. The 2-year, \$500,000 project aims to foster information sharing between Brazil and target Lusophone countries on best practices for eliminating the worst forms of child labor. Additionally, the program will provide technical assistance and guidance for countries to develop or refine national action plans on child labor.²⁵⁸⁶ Guinea-Bissau is also participating in a 4-country regional project to combat the worst forms of child labor. The program is funded by a \$5.2 million grant from the Government of Spain.²⁵⁸⁷

The Government continues to participate in a 3-year, \$7.9 million regional project funded by USDOL. The program is designed to strengthen ECOWAS' Child Policy and Strategic Plan of Action and to develop programs focusing on child trafficking as it pertains to the strategic plan.²⁵⁸⁸ In December 2010, the Government began participating in a second USDOL-funded regional project. The 3-year, \$5 million program is meant to expand and extend the work of the initial project.²⁵⁸⁹

The Government takes part in several anti-trafficking efforts. Through its National Trafficking Committee, the Government conducts trainings for civil and border police, as well as immigration and customs personnel.²⁵⁹⁰ USDOS is funding a 2-year, \$400,000 initiative to support anti-trafficking efforts and strengthen government and civil society capacity to provide services to child victims.²⁵⁹¹ The Government also provides \$16,000 in annual funding to a national NGO that fights child trafficking for forced begging in Koranic schools.²⁵⁹²

Government social programs are not sufficient to reach all children engaged in the worst forms of child labor, particularly those working in agriculture, street work, domestic service and commercial sexual exploitation.

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:

- Adopt and enforce a comprehensive list of hazardous activities prohibited for children younger than age 18.
- Enact and enforce legislation to explicitly criminalize forced begging and define it as a worst form of child labor.
- Raise the voluntary military recruitment age to 18, unconditionally.

IN THE AREA OF COORDINATION AND ENFORCEMENT:

- Establish a coordinating mechanism to combat all worst forms of child labor.
- Carry out regular inspections to monitor for child labor violations.
- Evaluate the sufficiency of resources provided to authorities tasked with monitoring, investigating and prosecuting child labor and child trafficking cases.
- Collect, analyze and publicize information on violations, enforcement actions and prosecutions related to the worst forms of child labor.

IN THE AREA OF POLICIES:

- Adopt national policies to address child labor.
- Adopt the national action plan to integrate Koranic schools into the national education system to allow for government oversight of violations involving forced begging.
- Explore ways to improve access to legally guaranteed free public education.

IN THE AREA OF PROGRAMS:

- Develop new and expand existing programs to reach more children engaged in the worst forms of child labor, particularly those working in agriculture, street work, domestic service and commercial sexual exploitation.

²⁵⁵² 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, school attendance, and children combining work and school are from 2006. 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.

²⁵⁵³ Ministry of Economy and UNICEF, *Guinée-Bissau: Enquete par Grappes a Indicateurs Multiples 2006*, June 2006, 84; available from http://www.childinfo.org/files/MICS3_GuineaBissau_FinalReport_2006_Fr.pdf. See also Guinea-Bissau PLAN International official, Interview with USDOL consultant, June 13, 2006, para 1. See also U.S. Department of State, "Guinea-Bissau," in *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2010*, Washington, DC, April 8, 2011, section 7d; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/af/154351.htm>. See also U.S. Embassy- Dakar, *reporting, March 28, 2011*, 1.1.

²⁵⁵⁴ Ministry of Education official, Interview with USDOL consultant, June 14, 2006, para 3. See also Guinea-Bissau PLAN International official, Interview, June 13, 2006, para 1. See also U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2010: Guinea-Bissau," section 7d.

²⁵⁵⁵ Guinea-Bissau PLAN International official, Interview, June 13, 2006, para 1. See also Accao para o desenvolvimento

official, Interview with USDOL consultant, May 30, 2006, para 1.

²⁵⁵⁶ U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports- 2010: Guinea-Bissau,” section 7d. See also U.S. Embassy- Dakar, *reporting, March 28, 2011*, 1.1. See also African Young Workers and Children Movement official, Interview with USDOL consultant, May 24, 2006, para 1.

²⁵⁵⁷ African Young Workers and Children Movement official, Interview, May 24, 2006, para 1. See also U.S. Embassy- Dakar, *reporting, March 28, 2011*, 1.1.

²⁵⁵⁸ U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports- 2010: Guinea-Bissau,” section 7c, 7d. See also U.S. Embassy- Dakar, *reporting, March 28, 2011*, 1.1. See also African Young Workers and Children Movement official, Interview, May 24, 2006, para 1.

²⁵⁵⁹ U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports- 2010: Guinea-Bissau,” sections 7c, 7d. See also U.S. Department of State, “Guinea-Bissau,” in *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2010*, Washington, DC, June 14, 2010; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2010/>. See also U.S. Embassy- Dakar, *reporting, March 25, 2011*, 2, 5c.

²⁵⁶⁰ U.S. Department of State, “Trafficking in Persons Report- 2010: Guinea-Bissau.” See also Jonina et. al. Einarsdottir, *Child Trafficking in Guinea-Bissau: An Exploratory Study*, UNICEF and University of Iceland, Reykjavik, 2010, VII; available from http://www.unicef.is/files/file/Mansal_isl.skysrsla.pdf. See also IOM, *Traditional Practices Being Abused to Exploit Children in West Africa, Warns IOM*, [online] 2006 [cited May 4, 2011]; available from <http://www.iom.int/jahia/Jahia/newsArticleAF/cache/offonce?entryId=12007>.

²⁵⁶¹ Human Rights Watch, *Off the Backs of Children: Forced Begging and Other Abuses against Talibes in Senegal*, New York, April 15, 2010, 2, 82-83; available from <http://www.hrw.org/node/89483>. See also U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports- 2010: Guinea-Bissau,” section 7c. See also U.S. Embassy- Dakar, *reporting, March 28, 2011*, 1.1. See also IOM, *Traditional Practices Being Abused*.

²⁵⁶² U.S. Embassy- Dakar, *reporting, March 28, 2011*, 1.1. See also Human Rights Watch, *Off the Backs of Children*, 25, 83.

²⁵⁶³ Human Rights Watch, *Off the Backs of Children*, 25-26.

²⁵⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 82-83.

²⁵⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 27-28. See also U.S. Embassy- Dakar, *reporting, March 25, 2011*, 1.1. See also U.S. Department of State, “Trafficking in Persons Report- 2010: Guinea-Bissau.” See also African Young Workers and Children Movement official, Interview, May 24, 2006, para 1. See also U.S. Embassy- Dakar, *reporting, March 28, 2011*, 1.1.

²⁵⁶⁶ U.S. Department of State, “Trafficking in Persons Report- 2010: Guinea-Bissau.” See also Network of Young Educators official, Interview with USDOL consultant, May 25, 2006,

para 14. See also Ministry of Labor and Civil Service official, Interview with USDOL consultant, May 26, 2006, para 1. See also U.S. Embassy- Dakar, *reporting, March 25, 2011*, 2, 12c. See also ADC official, Interview with USDOL consultant, June 6, 2006, para 3.

²⁵⁶⁷ U.S. Department of State, “Trafficking in Persons Report- 2010: Guinea-Bissau.” See also U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports- 2010: Guinea-Bissau,” section 7c. See also Integrated Regional Information Networks, “Guinea-Bissau-Senegal: On the child trafficking route”, IRINnews.org, [online], November 23, 2007 [cited May 4, 2011]; available from <http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?ReportID=75485>. See also Human Rights Watch, “Guinea-Bissau: Pass Anti-Trafficking Law”, HRW.org, [online], July 19, 2010 [cited January 18, 2011]; available from <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2010/07/20/guinea-bissau-pass-anti-trafficking-law>.

²⁵⁶⁸ General Labor Inspectorate official, Interview with USDOL consultant, May 26, 2006, para 1. See also U.S. Embassy- Dakar, *reporting, March 28, 2011*, 2.2.

²⁵⁶⁹ General Labor Inspectorate official, Interview, May 26, 2006, para 1. See also U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports- 2010: Guinea-Bissau,” section 7d.

²⁵⁷⁰ 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>.

²⁵⁷¹ Human Rights Watch, *Off the Backs of Children*, 83.

²⁵⁷² U.S. Embassy- Dakar, *reporting, March 28, 2011*, 2.4d.

²⁵⁷³ *Ibid.*, 2.4e, 2.5. See also Human Rights Watch, “Pass Anti-Trafficking Law”. See also U.S. Department of State, “Trafficking in Persons Report- 2010: Guinea-Bissau.” See also U.S. Embassy- Dakar official, E-mail communication to USDOL official, July 5, 2011.

²⁵⁷⁴ Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, “Guinea-Bissau,” in *Child Soldiers Global Report 2008*, London, 2008; available from http://www.childsoldiersglobalreport.org/files/country_pdfs/FINAL_2008_Global_Report.pdf. See also U.S. Embassy- Dakar, *reporting, March 28, 2011*, 2.4b.

²⁵⁷⁵ U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports- 2010: Guinea-Bissau,” section 6.

²⁵⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, section 6. See also Human Rights Watch, *Off the Backs of Children*, 83.

²⁵⁷⁷ Human Rights Watch, *Off the Backs of Children*, 83-84.

²⁵⁷⁸ U.S. Embassy- Dakar, *reporting, March 28, 2011*, 2.1, 3.1. See also U.S. Department of State, “Trafficking in Persons Report- 2010: Guinea-Bissau.”

²⁵⁷⁹ U.S. Embassy- Dakar, *reporting, March 28, 2011*, 4.1, 4.4.

²⁵⁸⁰ Ibid., 4.8.

²⁵⁸¹ Ibid., 5.1.

²⁵⁸² Human Rights Watch, “Pass Anti-Trafficking Law”. See also Human Rights Watch, *Off the Backs of Children*, 81.

²⁵⁸³ U.S. Embassy- Dakar, *reporting, March 28, 2011*, 5.1, 5.6.

²⁵⁸⁴ Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries, *Declaração de Luanda*, Ministras e os Ministros do Trabalho e dos Assuntos Sociais dos Países da Comunidade de Língua Portuguesa, Luanda, March 29 2011; available from <http://www.cplp.org/id-2281.aspx>. See also Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries, *II Reunião de pontos focais para área do Trabalho Infantil da CPLP* Maputo, October 28, 2010; available from <http://www.cplp.org/Default.aspx?ID=2281>. See also Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries, *Resolução sobre a Prevenção e a Eliminação da Exploração do Trabalho Infantil na CPLP*, Luanda, March 29, 2011; available from <http://www.cplp.org/Default.aspx?ID=2281>.

²⁵⁸⁵ Human Rights Watch, *Off the Backs of Children*, 84.

²⁵⁸⁶ ILO-IPEC, *Supporting Actions to Meet the 2015 Targets to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor in Lusophone Countries in Africa*, Draft Technical Cooperation Project Summary, Geneva, December 2010.

²⁵⁸⁷ ILO-IPEC official, E-mail communication to USDOL official, April 20, 2011.

²⁵⁸⁸ ILO-IPEC, *Eliminating the Worst Forms of Child Labour in West Africa and Strengthening Sub-Regional Cooperation through ECOWAS*, Project Document, Geneva, September 3, 2010, i, vii-viii.

²⁵⁸⁹ ILO-IPEC, *Eliminating the Worst Forms of Child Labour in West Africa and Strengthening Sub-Regional Cooperation through ECOWAS-II*, Project Document, Geneva, December 20, 2010, i, vi.

²⁵⁹⁰ Human Rights Watch, *Off the Backs of Children*, 80. See also Human Rights Watch, “Pass Anti-Trafficking Law”.

²⁵⁹¹ IOM, “Training in Guinea Bissau to Support Counter-Trafficking Partners”, IOM.int, [online], December 14, 2010 [cited March 28, 2011]; available from <http://www.google.com/search?hl=en&source=hp&biw=1659&bih=872&q=IOM+training+in+guinea+bissau+to+support+counter-trafficking+partners&aq=f&aqi=&aql=&oq=>. See also U.S. Department of State, *Anti-Trafficking Projects Awarded During Fiscal Years 2009 and 2010*, [online] [cited April 7, 2011]; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/other/2010/149560.htm>.

²⁵⁹² U.S. Embassy- Dakar, *reporting, March 28, 2011*, 3.1.