

In 2011, Guinea-Bissau made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government approved legislation that penalizes human trafficking for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation, forced labor and debt bondage. It released the *National Strategy to Combat Poverty (2011-2015)* that seeks to reduce poverty, improve access to basic services and generate income and employment opportunities. One of its priority areas is to strengthen government coordination and mechanisms to protect at-risk children, including children engaged in child labor. However, it has neither established a list of hazardous occupations that are prohibited for children nor provided enforcement officials with appropriate training and resources to monitor, investigate and prosecute cases of child labor. Children continue to engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in dangerous activities in agriculture and forced begging.

Statistics on Working Children and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working	5-14 yrs.	47.3 (219,734)
Attending School	5-14 yrs.	56.9
Combining Work and School	7-14 yrs.	34.6
Primary Completion Rate		67.6

Sources:

Primary completion rate: Data from 2010, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012.(1)

All other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from MICS3 Survey, 2006.(2)

Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Children in Guinea-Bissau are engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including dangerous activities in agriculture and forced begging. Recent information on the worst forms of child labor in agriculture is limited, but the 2010 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey reports (MICS) that 65 percent of children under age 14 in rural areas are engaged in child labor. (3, 4) Data from this survey were not analyzed in time for use in this report, so data from the 2006 MICS survey are included in the table above. Differences in how child labor is measured may explain why the rates in the two surveys are dissimilar, but further analysis is needed.



Reportedly, children work in cashew and rice production, harvesting cashews during the 4-month annual harvest and, in some cases, they are partially or completely withdrawn from school to work in the fields.(5-8) While country-specific information on the dangers children face in agriculture is not available, research studies and other reports have documented the dangerous nature of the tasks performed in agriculture and their accompanying occupational exposures, injuries and potential health consequences to children working in this sector.(9)

Reportedly, children herd cattle, fish and work in mines. (4, 8, 10, 11) While country-specific information on the dangers children face in herding cattle, fishing and mining is not available, research studies and other reports have documented the dangerous nature of the tasks performed in herding cattle, fishing and mining and their accompanying occupational exposures, injuries and potential health consequences to children working in these sectors.(9)

In Guinea-Bissau, it is traditional practice to send boys, known as *talibés*, away to be educated by Koranic teachers. Though many teachers carry out the intended tradition of providing education, some instead force students to beg on the streets for money and food and to then surrender their earnings.(12, 13) Teachers who force *talibés* to beg typically set a daily quota; if they do not meet the quota, they may be beaten. On the streets, these children work long hours and are vulnerable to car accidents, disease and severe weather, including scorching heat, as well as the risk of sexual exploitation.(4, 13, 14) Forced begging among *talibés* is believed to have increased over the last 5 years, particularly in the capital city of Bissau.(13)

In urban areas, many children work on the streets shining shoes, washing cars and selling goods.(4, 15) A 2011 study released by Guinea Bissau's Ministry of Justice and UNDP reported that some children who sell goods are obligated by their families to bring a certain amount home; otherwise, they are exposed to physical violence. These children may be

forced to engage in prostitution in order to meet their families' demands.(7)

Reportedly, children engage in carpentry, metalworking and mechanics. Children also work as domestic servants. (4, 7, 12, 15) While country-specific information on the dangers children face in domestic work is not available, research studies and other reports have documented the dangerous nature of tasks in domestic work and their accompanying occupational exposures, injuries and potential health consequences to children working in this sector.(9) Reports suggest that some children involved in street work and domestic service work under forced conditions.(12, 16)

A 2006 study published by the Government and UNICEF on child sexual abuse and commercial exploitation reports that children are engaged in prostitution in bars and clubs.(14) There are reports that children, including *talibés*, are trafficked internally and internationally to Senegal and other neighboring countries for domestic work, forced begging and agricultural labor, including cotton and peanut production.(12, 16, 17)

Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The General Labor Law sets the minimum age for employment at 14. The Government prohibits children younger than age 18 from engaging in heavy or dangerous labor, including work in mines or for long hours.(18) However, the Government has not established a 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	Grade 9
	Free Public Education	Yes

The Penal Code penalizes commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor, including for the purpose of sexual exploitation. (19) In June 2011, the Government approved anti-trafficking legislation that penalizes the recruitment, transportation and harboring of an individual for the purpose of prostitution, forced labor and debt bondage with jail terms of 3 to 15 years. The penalty is greater when such crimes are committed by guardians, such as religious teachers who are responsible for children's education.(20) The anti-trafficking legislation also punishes the production of pornography and sexual exploitation with prison terms of 5 to 8 years. In addition, this legislation mandates social assistance for victims of human trafficking and calls for anti-trafficking prevention initiatives.(20)

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. (4, 21) Guinea-Bissau has not yet ratified the UN Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict. In addition, the Government has not yet established legislation that prohibits the use of children for illicit activities.

The 2010 Education Law establishes free and compulsory education through ninth grade; however, it does not set a specific ending age for such education. Despite the fact that this law calls for free education through ninth grade, it also states that seventh through ninth grade will only gradually become free if resources are available.(22) Access to education is hindered by the lack of schools and trained teachers, poor teaching methods and informal school fees such as registration and monthly charges, which are common in public schools.(5, 13) According to the 2011 National Strategy to Combat Poverty, for every 100 children who enroll in first grade, only 40 children reach the sixth grade.(23)

Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement

The National Institute for Women and Children (NIMC) at the Ministry of Social Solidarity, Family and Fight Poverty coordinates efforts to protect the rights of children.(24, 25)

The National Anti-Trafficking Committee coordinates government efforts to combat human trafficking. The Committee is led by the NIMC and includes representatives from the Ministries of Interior, Justice, Health, Education and Transportation, as well as various NGOs.(16) To strengthen efforts to fight human trafficking, the 2011 Anti-Trafficking Law established a National Committee to Prevent, Combat and Assist Victims of Trafficking.(20) However, it is not clear what

the role of this new Committee is vis-a-vis the National Anti-Trafficking Committee.

Child labor legislation is enforced by the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Civil Service and Labor, in collaboration with the NIMC.(4, 25) Enforcement officials do not have appropriate training and equipment to carry out investigations of child labor cases and the lack of lawyers and courts in rural areas limits law enforcement.(4, 17) During the reporting period, there was no information available on the number of investigations, prosecutions or convictions conducted regarding child labor.

The Ministry of Interior leads efforts to combat child trafficking.(4) Police and border officials are tasked with preventing traffickers from entering or exiting the country with children. Local police and the NIMC, along with UNICEF, maintain data on child trafficking.(4) However, there is no information available on the number of human trafficking investigations, prosecutions or convictions conducted during the reporting period. In April 2011, news outlets reported that the Government had rescued six children who were to be trafficked to Senegal and detained the suspected traffickers.(26, 27) However, there is no information available on the result of this case.

In 2011, the Government of Italy provided motorcycles and training on anti-trafficking to border officials. However, reports suggest that police and border officials still lack sufficient training and equipment to perform their work.(13, 17)

The Government of Guinea-Bissau works closely with the Government of Senegal to combat child trafficking. Together, they repatriated 120 child victims of trafficking to Guinea-Bissau in 2011.(17)

Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Education Action Plan for All (2000-2015) guides Guinea-Bissau's efforts to ensure universal access to education and facilitate inter-agency coordination.(28)

In 2011, the Government adopted a Human Anti-Trafficking Action Plan that ensures funding from the national budget.(17) It established the Second National Strategy to Combat Poverty (2011-2015), which seeks to reduce poverty from 69.3 percent to 59 percent by 2015—and extreme poverty from 33 percent to 20 percent by 2015—improve access to basic services, and generate income and employment opportunities. One of its priority areas is to strengthen government coordination and mechanisms to protect at-risk children, including children engaged in child labor.(29)

As a member of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking countries (CPLP), Guinea-Bissau has established four target areas 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.(30-32)

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

The Government of Guinea-Bissau raised awareness of child trafficking for forced begging, and partnered with local NGOs and international organizations to assist child victims. In 2011, it conducted a national awareness-raising campaign that included workshops with local government officials, religious leaders, parents and traditional authorities, and dissemination of information through radio announcements, informational flyers and door-to-door visits.(17) During the reporting period, the regions of Bafatá and Gabú worked with UNICEF and local NGOs to help child victims.(17)

The Government participates in child labor projects funded by USDOL, including a 2-year, \$500,000 project that fosters the exchange of best practices among Brazil and African Lusophone countries, including Guinea-Bissau, to combat child labor. During the reporting period, this initiative launched a Web portal to share information on child labor.(33, 34) Guinea-Bissau also participates in ECOWAS I, a 3-year, \$7.9 million regional project that seeks to strengthen ECOWAS's Child Policy and Strategic Plan of Action and help country members develop anti-child-trafficking programs. It also participates in a 3-year, \$5 million program that aims to expand the work of the ECOWAS I Project.(35, 36) In 2011, these projects provided technical assistance to ECOWAS to develop a Draft Regional Plan of Action for the Elimination of Child Labor.(37)

In addition, the Government of Guinea-Bissau participates in a 4-country, \$5.2 million regional project to combat the worst forms of child labor, funded by the Government of Spain. The Government of Brazil supports the implementation of the Decent Work Agenda within the CPLP, which includes the exchange of best practices among country members, including Guinea-Bissau, to combat child labor.(38, 39). The Government of Guinea-Bissau also takes part in a USDOS-funded, 2-year \$400,000 initiative to support anti-trafficking efforts and strengthen government and civil society capacity to provide services to child victims.(40) Research has not identified other government programs that address other worst forms of child labor such as in agriculture or street work.

The Government carries out a national school lunch program that covers 300 schools. It also participates in the World

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Bank's Global Partnership for Education initiative that helps low-income countries ensure that all children attend school, stay in school longer and receive a quality education.(24, 41, 42) The World Bank and the European Union also support Guinea-Bissau's efforts to improve food security. As of August 2011, they had provided school meals to more than 42,000 children and food-for-work opportunities to more than 50,000 persons. (43) In 2011, the Government of Guinea-Bissau partnered with the Government of Japan, the UN World

Food Program and UNICEF to provide 1 million textbooks to approximately 1,000 schools.(44)

Guinea-Bissau has a cash transfer program aimed at vulnerable populations that benefits 2,500 individuals throughout the country.(5) However, according to the 2011 Second National Strategy to Combat Poverty, poverty rates increased from 64.7 percent in 2002 to 69.3 percent in 2010, and most Guinea-Bissauans do not have access to social safety net programs.(29)

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

Area	Suggested Actions	Year(s) Action Recommended
Laws and Regulations	Establish a comprehensive list of hazardous activities prohibited for children younger than age 18.	2009, 2011
	Raise the age of voluntary military recruitment to 18 or bar combat activities for volunteers under 18.	2010, 2011
	Ratify the UN Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict.	2011
	Adopt legislation that bans the use of children for illicit activities.	2011
	Clarify the age to which education is compulsory.	2011
Coordination and Enforcement	Clarify the roles of the National Anti-Trafficking Committee and the National Committee to Prevent, Combat and Assist Victims of Trafficking.	2011
	Boost institutional capacity of the Ministries of Interior, Justice, and Civil Service and Labor to enforce child labor legislation by — <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training enforcement officials on child labor legislation. • Providing enforcement officials with sufficient resources to monitor, investigate and prosecute child labor and child trafficking cases. • Considering expanding the number of courts in areas with high rates of child labor and child trafficking. • Making information publicly available about labor inspections, including the number of labor inspectors, inspections, violations, enforcement actions and prosecutions related to the worst forms of child labor. 	2009, 2010, 2011 2011 2010, 2011 2009, 2010, 2011
Policies	Step up efforts to improve access to education.	2011
	Conduct research to complement the 2010 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey in order to determine the extent and nature of the worst forms of child labor in agriculture and street work.	2011
Social Programs	Develop new programs and expand existing programs to reach more children engaged in the worst forms of child labor, particularly those engaged in agriculture, forced begging and street work.	2009, 2010, 2011
	Expand social safety net programs aimed at vulnerable populations.	2011

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