

In 2019, Guinea-Bissau made a minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The National Institute for Women and Children and the National Guard for Migration Services conducted human trafficking trainings for law enforcement officials, including on a national referral mechanism, assistance to victims, and data management. The government also approved the National Action Plan to Eliminate and Combat Trafficking in Persons, which aims to strengthen legislation and promote coordination among relevant government agencies. However, children in Guinea-Bissau engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in forced begging, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also engage in child labor in agriculture. In addition, the minimum age for work is not in compliance with international standards, because the law's minimum age protections do not apply to children without a work contract. Law enforcement officials do not receive sufficient training and resources to adequately conduct inspections and prosecute cases of child labor, and social programs do not fully address the extent of the problem in the country.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Guinea-Bissau engage in the worst forms of child labor in forced begging, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. (1-3) Children also engage in child labor in agriculture. (1,3-5) According to a national child labor survey, more than 169,200 children ages 5 to 17 work; 85 percent of these children work in agriculture. (5) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Guinea-Bissau.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	57.4 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	68.1
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	48.4
Primary Completion Rate (%)		65.1

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2010, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2020. (6)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 5 (MICS 5), 2014. (7)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, including the production of cashews (1,4,5,8)
	Fishing, activities unknown (1,4,5)
Services	Domestic work (1,5,9,10)
	Street work, including car washing, shoe shining, and vending (1,3)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1,3,9,11)
	Forced labor in domestic work, agriculture, and street work, including begging, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1-3,9-11)

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

In Guinea-Bissau, organized networks of human traffickers affiliated with Koranic schools force boys to beg within the country and in The Gambia, Guinea, Mali, and Senegal. Although many Koranic school teachers provide religious education as traditionally intended, some force the students, known as *talibés*, to beg on the streets for money and food. (1-3,10) Most *talibés* originate from the areas of Bafatá and Gabú in the eastern region of the country. (1-3,12)

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Bissau-Guinean boys are forced to work in street vending domestically; they also are trafficked to Senegal for forced labor in agriculture, mining, and street vending. Boys from Guinea-Bissau and boys from neighboring countries are forced to beg and harvest cashews domestically. (1,3,8,10,11) Girls are subjected to forced labor in street vending and domestic work in Guinea-Bissau and Senegal. Girls also are engaged in commercial sexual exploitation, including in sex tourism, in the Bijagós Archipelago of Guinea-Bissau, on mainland Guinea-Bissau in bars and hotels, and in Senegal. (1,3,9,11)




Barriers to education for children include lack of schools, poor infrastructure, long distances, and a lack of trained teachers, particularly in rural areas. Reports indicate that only one in three children have access to primary education in Guinea-Bissau. (1,10,13) Although the Ministry of Public Education continued to raise awareness of the need to enroll and keep children in school, most children did not attend school during the reporting period due to continuous strikes by teachers over unpaid salaries. (1,2,10,13)

Political instability may have affected the government's ability to address the worst forms of child labor. (1,14)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Guinea-Bissau has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Guinea-Bissau's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the minimum age for work.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	14	Article 146 of the General Labor Law (15)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 148 of the General Labor Law (15)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	No		Article 148 of the General Labor Law (15)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 2, 4, and 15 of the Law to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking; Article 106 of the Penal Code (16,17)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 2, 4, and 15 of the Law to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking (17)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 3–5 of the Law to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking; Articles 134 and 136 of the Penal Code (16,17)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 3 and 7 of the Decree on Narcotic Substances (18)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	17	Article 31 of Law No. 4/99 (19)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 2 of Law No. 4/99 (19)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15‡	Articles 12–13 of the Education System Law (20)
Free Public Education	No		Article 12 (2) of the Education System Law (20)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (20,21)

The minimum age for work is not in compliance with international standards because the law's minimum age protections do not apply to children working without a work contract. (15,21) Moreover, the government has not determined by national law or regulation the types of hazardous work prohibited for children. (15,21)

The Education System Law states that basic education is compulsory and lasts 9 years; however, it only makes basic education free through grade six, leaving children in grades seven through nine without access to free basic education. (20) In addition, because the minimum age for work is lower than the compulsory education age, children may be encouraged to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. (15,20)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor and Public Administration that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Labor and Public Administration	Enforces child labor legislation in collaboration with the ministries of the Interior and Justice, and the National Institute for Women and Children (IMC). (1)
Ministry of the Interior's Public Order Police and National Guard	Combat child labor through the prevention of child trafficking. (1)
Judicial Police's Women and Children Brigade	Investigates the worst forms of child labor and refers cases to the IMC and NGOs. Comprising eight officers. (1)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2019, labor law enforcement agencies in Guinea-Bissau took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor and Public Administration that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including complaint and referral mechanisms.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2018	2019
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Labor Inspectors	30 (22)	28 (1)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Unknown	Yes (1)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	No (22)	No (1)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A (22)	N/A
Refresher Courses Provided	No (22)	Yes (1)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	121 (22)	49 (1)
Number Conducted at Worksite	121 (22)	49 (1)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (22)	0 (1)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A	N/A
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A	N/A
Routine Inspections Conducted	No (22)	No (1)
Routine Inspections Targeted	No (22)	No (1)

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Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor (Cont.)

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2018	2019
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (22)	Yes (1)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (22)	Yes (1)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	No (22)	No (1)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	No (22)	No (1)

In November 2019, labor inspectors received training during a 3-day workshop that included capacity building and the analysis of labor laws. (1,23) Reports indicate that not only is the number of labor inspectors not sufficient to target the scope of the problem in the country, but limited resources, such as 1 vehicle shared among 28 inspectors with no budget for fuel, severely hinders the Ministry of Labor and Public Administration's abilities to enforce child labor laws. (1)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2019, criminal law enforcement agencies in Guinea-Bissau took actions to combat child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including financial resources.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2018	2019
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	No (22)	Yes (24)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A	N/A
Refresher Courses Provided	No (22)	Yes (1)
Number of Investigations	Unknown	4 (1)
Number of Violations Found	7‡ (22)	Unknown
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Convictions	Unknown	Unknown
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to The Worst Forms of Child Labor	No (22)	Unknown
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	No (22)	No (1)

‡ Data are from January 2018 to August 2018.

In 2019, the National Institute for Women and Children (IMC) and the National Guard for Migration Services conducted trafficking in persons training for law enforcement officials. The UN and other bilateral donors funded the training, which covered a national referral mechanism, victim assistance and communication, and data management. (1) The IMC also identified 105 children engaged in forced begging as a result of human trafficking, and in partnership with NGO stakeholders, assisted these children with reintegration, medical assistance, and shelter placement. (14) However, the government reported that training resources for criminal law enforcement officials were insufficient, and reports indicate that due to the lack of an operating budget, criminal investigators are hindered from investigating cases outside the capital of Bissau, including Gabú and Bafatá, where child labor is known to occur. (1,2,8,14)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

Table 8. Key Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
Inter-Ministerial Commission to Fight Child Labor	Coordinates the government's efforts to prevent and eliminate child labor. Established in 2010. (22) In 2019, met semi-regularly. (14)
National Committee to Prevent and Combat Trafficking in Persons	Coordinates government efforts to combat human trafficking. Led by IMC. (22,25) In 2019, collaborated in the drafting of the National Action Plan to Eliminate and Combat Trafficking in Persons. (26)

Table 8. Key Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor (Cont.)

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Institute for Women and Children (IMC)	Coordinates with NGOs and other partner organizations to rehabilitate and reintegrate child victims of exploitation. (1) In 2019, organized a conference to discuss and validate the National Action Plan to Eliminate and Combat Trafficking in Persons, which was attended by the Anti-Trafficking Coordination Committee, including National Guard, Judicial Police, Labor Inspectorate General, Public Prosecutor, Ministry of Tourism, NGOs, and religious leaders. (14)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including implementation.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
National Policy for the Protection of Children and Adolescents (2018–2030)	Guides the government's policies for combating violence toward children, including child labor. (27) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement this policy during the reporting period.
Code of Conduct Against Sexual Exploitation in Tourism	Seeks to raise awareness on commercial sexual exploitation of children and child trafficking in Guinea-Bissau, particularly in the Bijagós Archipelago. (28) In 2019, the policy was implemented by the Ministry of Tourism and IMC, within the regions of Bubaque, São Domingos, and Bissau. (14)
UN Country Partnership Framework (2016–2020)	Aims to assist in promoting free and universal birth registration, and enforcing human trafficking and child labor provisions. (29) Since 2016, helped IMC reintegrate 132 <i>talibés</i> with their families; and provided access to shelter, schools, and psychological and medical assistance. (30)
National Action Plan to Eliminate and Combat Trafficking in Persons†	Aims to prevent and reduce human trafficking by strengthening legislation, coordinating actions and initiatives among government agencies, promoting the coordination and collaboration of relevant stakeholders, and improving protective services and assistance to victims. Led by IMC with collaboration from national and international NGOs and relevant government entities. (26)

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2019, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating and preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the adequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
UNICEF Country Program (2016–2020)	UNICEF-funded program, in collaboration with the government, that aims to prevent and combat child trafficking through education, social protection mechanisms, and capacity building for law enforcement officials. (31)
Friends of the Child Shelters (Associação dos Amigos da Crianças)†	Donor-funded program, with government support, implemented by an NGO that provides social services to vulnerable children, including victims of the worst forms of child labor. (32,33) In 2019, provided services to seven child victims of forced labor on cashew plantations. (1) In addition, provided identification and reintegration services to 127 child victims of exploitation. (14)

† Program is funded by the Government of Guinea-Bissau.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (34)

During the reporting period, local vigilance committees in Gabú and Bafatá conducted awareness-raising activities, which resulted in a decrease of trafficking in persons activities throughout official border checkpoints. (14) Reports suggest, however, that the government has not conducted any national public awareness-raising campaigns on human trafficking, including child trafficking. (35)

Reports indicate that services provided by shelters do not meet international standards due to funding constraints. (32) In addition, although Guinea-Bissau has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem.

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VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Guinea-Bissau (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure the minimum age for work applies to all children, including children without a work contract.	2015 – 2019
	Determine by national law or regulation the types of hazardous work prohibited for children, after consultation with employers' and workers' organizations.	2009 – 2019
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2019
	Ensure that all 9 years of basic education are free.	2015 – 2019
	Raise the minimum age for work to the age up to which education is compulsory.	2018 – 2019
Enforcement	Ensure that the number of law enforcement officials is sufficient to address the scope of the problem, and that both law and criminal enforcement officials receive adequate training and resources to inspect, investigate, and prosecute cases of child labor throughout the country, including in Bafatá and Gabú, where child labor is known to occur.	2009 – 2019
	Strengthen the labor inspectorate by initiating routine inspections and targeting inspections based on the analysis of data related to risk-prone sectors and patterns of serious incidents.	2016 – 2019
	Establish a mechanism to receive child labor complaints.	2016 – 2019
	Establish referral mechanisms to ensure that children found during labor inspections and criminal investigations are referred to social services providers.	2016 – 2019
	Publish labor and criminal enforcement data, including information on labor inspectorate funding, the number of violations found, prosecutions initiated, convictions secured, and penalties imposed.	2009 – 2019
Government Policies	Ensure that National Policy for the Protection of Children and Adolescents is implemented.	2017 – 2019
Social Programs	Enhance efforts to eliminate barriers and make education accessible for all children, including in rural areas, by increasing school infrastructure, increasing teacher availability and capability, and providing transportation.	2019
	Significantly increase efforts to raise national awareness of human trafficking, including child trafficking.	2018 – 2019
	Ensure that facilities, including shelters, have adequate resources to assist victims of the worst forms of child labor.	2015 – 2019
	Expand existing programs to address the scope of the child labor problem.	2009 – 2019

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