

In 2020, Guinea-Bissau made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The National Institute for Women and Children identified and assisted 75 talibé children with medical assistance, shelter, family identification and the registration of birth certificates. In addition, in October 2020, the government reopened schools with provisions aimed at addressing lost school time due to lengthy teacher strikes and the COVID-19 pandemic, including an increase of an additional school day to each week of the school calendar to ensure minimal repercussions to children's education. However, children in Guinea-Bissau are subjected to 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. Furthermore, the minimum age for work is not in compliance with international standards since the law's minimum age protections do not apply to children without a work contract. Lastly, 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 are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in forced begging, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. (1-3) Children also engage in child labor in agriculture. (2,4-6) 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. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

**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 (%)		Unavailable

Primary completion rate was unavailable from UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2021. (7)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 5 (MICS 5), 2014. (8)

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 (4-6,9)
	Fishing, activities unknown (5,6)
Services	Domestic work (4-6,10,11)
	Street work, including shoe shining and vending (6)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (2,3,12)
	Forced labor in domestic work, agriculture, and street work, including begging, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1-3,10,11)

‡ 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

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religious education as traditionally intended, some force the students, known as *talibés*, to beg on the streets for money and food. (1,2,11,13) Most *talibés* originate from the areas of Bafatá and Gabú in the eastern region of the country. (1,2,13,14)

Bissau-Guinean boys are forced to work in street vending domestically; they are also transported by human traffickers 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. (2,3,9,11,13) Girls are subjected to forced labor in street vending and domestic work in Guinea-Bissau and Senegal. Girls are also subjected to 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. (2,3,10,13)







Barriers to education for children include lack of schools, poor infrastructure, and long distances, particularly in rural areas. (1,6,15) Reports indicate that only one in three children have access to primary education in Guinea-Bissau. (1,11) During the reporting period, most children did not attend school due to strikes by teachers over unpaid salaries, which have been ongoing since 2019. (6,16) The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in further school closings, and public school children's access to virtual classes was limited. (6) However, in October 2020 schools reopened with provisions aimed at addressing the lost school time, including an increase of an additional day to each week of the school calendar to ensure minimal consequences to children's education. (17)

Political instability may have affected the government's ability to address the worst forms of child labor. (6,18)

## 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	Articles 1, 2, 146 and 186 of the General Labor Law (19)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 148 and 186 of the General Labor Law (19)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	No		Article 148 of the General Labor Law (19)
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 (20,21)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 2, 4, and 15 of the Law to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking (21)

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

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 3–5 and 15 of the Law to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking; Articles 134 and 136 of the Penal Code (20,21)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 3 and 7 of the Decree on Narcotic Substances (22)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	17	Article 31 of Law No. 4/99 (23)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 2 of Law No. 4/99 (23)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15‡	Articles 12–13 of the Education System Law (24)
Free Public Education	No		Article 12(2) of the Education System Law (24)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (24,25)

The legislature is in the process of adopting amendments to the Code of Child Protection, which were drafted in 2019, to harmonize its human trafficking provisions with international law. (26)

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. Moreover, the government has not determined by national law or regulation the types of hazardous work prohibited for children. (19,25)

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. (24) 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. (19,24)

### 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 enforcement agencies 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). (13)
Ministry of the Interior's Public Order Police and National Guard	Combats child labor through the prevention of child trafficking. (13)
Judicial Police's Women and Children Brigade	Investigates the worst forms of child labor, including child trafficking, and refers cases to IMC and NGOs. Comprising seven officers. (6)

#### **Labor Law Enforcement**

In 2020, 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.

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**Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor**

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2019	2020
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown	Unknown (6)
Number of Labor Inspectors	28 (13)	28 (6)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Yes (27)	Yes (28)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	No (13)	Yes (26)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A	N/A
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (13)	Unknown
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	49 (13)	Unknown
Number Conducted at Worksite	49 (13)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (13)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A	Unknown
Routine Inspections Conducted	No (13)	No (6)
Routine Inspections Targeted	No (13)	No (6)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (27)	Yes (28)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (13)	Yes (6)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	No (13)	No (6)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	No (13)	No (6)

Reports indicate that not only is the number of labor inspectors insufficient 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 ability to enforce child labor laws. (13) In addition, reports indicate that due to lack of funding, inspectors respond mainly to complaints rather than initiating targeted inspections based on risk-prone sectors and patterns of serious incidents. (26)

In 2020, pre-scheduled trainings for labor inspectors were cancelled due to the pandemic. (26) The government did not provide information related to the number of labor inspections conducted, the number of child labor violations found, or the number of penalties imposed or collected for child labor violations. (6)

### **Criminal Law Enforcement**

In 2020, 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 allocation of financial resources.

**Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor**

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2019	2020
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Yes (29)	No (6)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A	N/A
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (13)	No (26)
Number of Investigations	4 (13)	8 (26)
Number of Violations Found	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Convictions	Unknown	Unknown
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown	Unknown
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	No (13)	No (6)

The government reported 34 cases of human trafficking during the reporting period. (26,30) Of these 34 cases, the Judicial Police reported investigating 8 cases of child trafficking related to *talibés* and 26 cases of sex trafficking. It is unknown if any of the sex trafficking cases involved children. (26,30) The government did not provide information regarding the number of prosecutions, convictions, or imposed penalties for violations

related to the worst forms of child labor during the reporting period. Aside from the 34 human trafficking cases reported, comprehensive data on the number of investigations conducted during 2020 were not provided. (26,30)

In 2020, the government did not provide any specialized anti-trafficking trainings. Moreover, most planned trainings by international organizations were cancelled or postponed due to the pandemic, though some resumed during the latter part of the year, including trainings on communication and assistance to victims and data management that were funded by IOM and UNODC. (26,30) The Judicial Police received some funding and training from the UN and bilateral donors; however, it lacked an operating budget and had very limited resources, hindering criminal law enforcement from investigating cases outside of the capital of Bissau, including in Gabú and Bafatá, where child labor is known to occur. (1,6,9,26)

#### IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that may hinder the adequate coordination of efforts to address child labor, including efficacy in accomplishing mandates.

**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. (31) Research was unable to determine whether the Inter-Ministerial Commission to Fight Child Labor was active during the reporting period.
Inter-Ministerial Committee to Prevent and Combat Trafficking in Persons	Coordinates government efforts to combat human trafficking. Led by the IMC. (31) In 2020, continued coordinating efforts to combat human trafficking, including the formation of sub-committees at the regional level to prevent child trafficking. (6)
National Institute for Women and Children (IMC)	Coordinates with NGOs and other partner organizations to rehabilitate and reintegrate child victims of exploitation. (13) In 2020, in collaboration with the Government of Senegal, rescued and repatriated 18 child trafficking victims. Between March 2020 and February 2021, identified and assisted 75 <i>talibés</i> with family identification, medical assistance, shelter, and the registration of birth certificates. Provided shelter services to vulnerable children during the pandemic, and initiated dialogues with Koranic teachers regarding <i>talibé</i> human trafficking victims. (26)

#### 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. (32) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement this policy during the reporting period.
National Emergency Plan for the Prevention and Combat of Trafficking in Persons (2020–2021)	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 the IMC with the collaboration of national and international NGOs and relevant government entities. (33) The government officially approved the National Emergency Plan for the Prevention and Combat of Trafficking in Persons in July 2020. (26)
Code of Conduct Against Sexual Exploitation in Tourism	Seeks to raise awareness of commercial sexual exploitation of children and child trafficking in Guinea-Bissau, particularly in the Bijagós Archipelago. (34) In 2020, the IMC and the Ministry of Tourism continued to implement the Code of Conduct Against Sexual Exploitation in Tourism. (26)
UN Country Partnership Framework (2016–2020)	Aimed to assist in promoting free and universal birth registration, and enforcing human trafficking and child labor provisions. (35) Since 2016, helped the IMC reintegrate 132 <i>talibés</i> with their families, and provided access to shelter, schools, and psychological and medical assistance. (36)

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### VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2020, 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
Friends of the Child Shelters ( <i>Associação dos Amigos da Criança</i> )†	Donor-funded program, with government support, implemented by a national NGO that provides social services to vulnerable children, including victims of the worst forms of child labor. (37,38) In 2020, assisted 159 child trafficking victims.(6)
UNICEF Country Program (2016–2020)	UNICEF-funded program, in collaboration with the government, that aimed to prevent and combat child trafficking through education, social protection mechanisms, and capacity building for law enforcement officials. (39)

† 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. (40)

Reports suggest that the government has not conducted any national public awareness-raising campaigns on human trafficking, including child trafficking. (26)

Reports indicate that due to funding constraints, services provided by shelters do not meet quality of care standards. (37) 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.

### 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 that the minimum age for work applies to all children, including children without a work contract.	2015 – 2020
	Determine by national law or regulation the types of hazardous work prohibited for children, after consultation with employers' and workers' organizations.	2009 – 2020
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2020
	Ensure that all 9 years of basic education are free.	2015 – 2020
	Raise the minimum age for work to the age up to which education is compulsory.	2018 – 2020
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 – 2020
	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 – 2020
	Establish a mechanism to receive child labor complaints.	2016 – 2020
	Establish referral mechanisms to ensure that children found during labor inspections and criminal investigations are referred to the appropriate social services providers.	2016 – 2020
	Publish labor law enforcement data, including information on labor inspectorate funding, the number of inspections conducted, violations found, and the number of child labor violations for which penalties were imposed and collected. In addition, publish criminal law enforcement data that are disaggregated for crimes against children, including the number of child labor investigations, violations found, prosecutions initiated, convictions secured, and penalties imposed for violations related to the worst forms of child labor.	2009 – 2020
Coordination	Ensure that the Inter-Ministerial Commission to Fight Child Labor is able to carry out its intended mandate.	2020

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Government Policies	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement the National Policy for the Protection of Children and Adolescents.	2017 – 2020
Social Programs	Significantly increase efforts to raise national awareness of human trafficking, including child trafficking.	2018 – 2020
	Ensure that facilities, including shelters, have adequate resources to assist victims of the worst forms of child labor.	2015 – 2020
	Expand existing programs to address the scope of the child labor problem.	2009 – 2020
	Enhance efforts to eliminate barriers and make education accessible for all children by increasing the number of schools, improving school infrastructure, and providing transportation, particularly in rural areas.	2019 – 2020

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