

In 2021, Guinea-Bissau made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor.

The government finalized the Code of Integral Child Protection, which aims to harmonize child protection laws, including child labor laws, and serve as a comprehensive national regulation on the protection of children's rights. The National Institute for Women and Children collaborated with the International Organization for Migration, the United Nations Children's Fund, and other partners to develop a legal framework and policies necessary for the implementation of the Code of Integral Child Protection, and provided training and awareness raising

related to the new code to community leaders. In addition, the Institute identified and assisted 92 child victims of forced begging and 33 suspected child victims of sexual exploitation. However, children in Guinea-Bissau are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in forced begging. Children also engage in child labor in agriculture. Guinea-Bissau's legal framework does not sufficiently prohibit the commercial sexual exploitation of children and 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. Furthermore, 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. (1,2) 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. (4) 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	18.8 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	97.6
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	20.6
Primary Completion Rate (%)		Unavailable

Primary completion rate was unavailable from UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2022. (6)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS6), 2019. (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 (3-5,8)
	Fishing (4,5)
Industry	Construction (5)
Services	Domestic work (2-4,9,10)
	Street work, including shoe shining and vending (11)
	Working as mechanics, activities unknown (5)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Working in nightclubs, including washing dishes and custodial work (5)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1,12)
	Forced labor in domestic work, agriculture, and street work, including begging (1,2,10)

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

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In Guinea-Bissau, organized networks of human traffickers affiliated with Koranic schools force boys to beg within the country and in Senegal, and to a lesser extent in The Gambia, Guinea, and Mali. 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. (1,2,13,14) Most *talibés* originate from the areas of Bafatá and Gabú in the eastern region of the country. (1,13-15)




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. (1,2,5,8) Girls are subjected to forced labor in street vending and domestic work in Guinea-Bissau. Girls are also subjected to commercial sexual exploitation, including in sex tourism, in the Bijagós Archipelago of Guinea-Bissau and on mainland Guinea-Bissau in bars and hotels. (1,10,14)

During the reporting period, school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic and teacher strikes limited children's access to education. Reports also indicate that during the cashew harvesting season, children assist their families and are less likely to attend school. (16) Other educational barriers included inadequate school infrastructure and long distances to schools, particularly in rural areas. (5)

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 (17)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 148 and 186 of the General Labor Law (17)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	No		Article 148 of the General Labor Law (17)
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 (18,19)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 2-4, and 15 of the Law to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking (19)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Articles 3-5 and 15 of the Law to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking; Articles 134 and 136 of the Penal Code (18,19)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 3 and 7 of the Decree on Narcotic Substances (20)

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

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	17	Article 31 of Law No. 4/99 (21)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 2 of Law No. 4/99 (21)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15‡	Articles 12 and 13 of the Education System Law (22)
Free Public Education	No		Article 12(2) of the Education System Law (22)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (22,23)

In 2021, the government finalized the Code of Integral Child Protection, which aims to harmonize child protection laws, including child labor laws, and to serve as a coherent national regulation that comprehensively protects children's rights. (5,24)

The law does not sufficiently prohibit commercial sexual exploitation because the use of children in prostitution is not criminally prohibited. 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. (17,23)

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. (22) Since the minimum age for work in Guinea-Bissau is currently lower than the compulsory education age, children may be encouraged to leave school before the completion of compulsory education. (17,22)

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). (5)
Ministry of the Interior's Public Order Police and National Guard	Enforce child trafficking laws and refer cases to IMC and NGOs. (5)
Judicial Police's Women and Children Brigade	Investigates cases involving the worst forms of child labor and refers them to IMC and NGOs. Comprising six officers. (5)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2021, labor law enforcement agencies in Guinea-Bissau took actions to address 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 a lack of complaint and referral mechanisms.

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Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2020	2021
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (9)	Unknown
Number of Labor Inspectors	28 (9)	33 (5)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (25)	Yes (25)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Yes (26)	Unknown
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A	N/A (5)
Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown	No (5)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	Unknown	156 (5)
Number Conducted at Worksite	Unknown	156 (5)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown	0 (5)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown	N/A
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown	N/A
Routine Inspections Conducted	No (9)	Unknown
Routine Inspections Targeted	No (9)	No (5)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (25)	Yes (25)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (9)	Yes (5)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	No (9)	No (5)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	No (9)	No (5)

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 one vehicle being shared among all labor inspectors, with no budget for fuel) severely hinders the Ministry of Labor and Public Administration's ability to enforce child labor laws. (5) In addition, reports indicate that due to a lack of funding, inspectors respond mainly to complaints rather than initiating targeted inspections based on risk-prone sectors and patterns of serious incidents, and rely on their own personal means to perform labor inspections. In 2021, labor inspections were not conducted in sectors in which child labor is known to occur. (5) Reports also indicate that it is unknown whether any of the 156 labor inspections conducted during the reporting period were child-labor specific. (16)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2021, criminal law enforcement agencies in Guinea-Bissau took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including insufficient allocation of financial resources.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2020	2021
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	No (9)	No (5)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A	No (5)
Refresher Courses Provided	No (26)	No (5)
Number of Investigations	8 (26)	0 (16)
Number of Violations Found	Unknown	0 (16)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown	0 (5)
Number of Convictions	Unknown	0 (16)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown	N/A (5)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	No (9)	Yes (5)

In 2021, there were no cases of commercial sexual exploitation of children reported in the country. (16)

During the reporting period, eight National Guard agents, one from each of the eight regional posts across Guinea-Bissau, received training on child protection issues, including child trafficking. (5) The National Guard and Judicial Police refer cases of the worst forms of child labor, including child trafficking, to the National Institute for Women and Children for referral to social services providers. (5)

Reports indicate that criminal enforcement agencies 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. (5,9,26)

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 lack of efficacy in accomplishing mandates.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
Interministerial Commission to Fight Child Labor	Coordinates the government's efforts to prevent and eliminate child labor. Established in 2010. (27) Research was unable to determine whether the Interministerial Commission to Fight Child Labor was active during the reporting period.
Interministerial Committee to Prevent and Combat Trafficking in Persons	Coordinates government efforts to address human trafficking. Led by IMC. (27) During the reporting period, met regularly, but lack of funding limited its ability to accomplish its mandate. (16)
National Institute for Women and Children (IMC)	Coordinates with NGOs and other partner organizations to rehabilitate and reintegrate child victims of exploitation. (14) In 2021, collaborated with IOM, UNICEF, and other partners to develop the legal framework and policies necessary for the implementation of the Code of Integral Child Protection. In addition, the institute provided training and awareness raising related to the new code to community leaders. (5) During the reporting period, IMC also identified 92 child victims of forced begging and 33 suspected child victims of sexual exploitation, and assisted the victims with family identification, medical assistance, shelter and reintegration. (16)

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 addressing violence toward children, including child labor. (28)
National Emergency Plan for the Prevention and Combat of Trafficking in Persons (2020–2021)	Aimed 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 the collaboration of national and international NGOs and relevant government entities. (29)
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. (30)

Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement key policies related to child labor in Guinea-Bissau during the reporting period.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2021, 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 inadequacy 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. (32) During the reporting period, contributed toward the drafting of the Code of Integral Child Protection, and conducted awareness-raising activities on human trafficking and gender-based violence throughout the country. (5)

† 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. (33)

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

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 – 2021
	Determine by national law or regulation the types of hazardous work prohibited for children, after consultation with employers' and workers' organizations.	2009 – 2021
	Ensure that laws criminally prohibit the use of a child for prostitution.	2021
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2021
	Ensure that all 9 years of basic education are free.	2015 – 2021
	Raise the minimum age for work to the age up to which education is compulsory.	2018 – 2021
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 – 2021
	Ensure the government conducts an adequate number of labor inspections.	2021
	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 – 2021
	Establish referral mechanisms to ensure that children found during labor inspections and criminal investigations are referred to the appropriate social services providers.	2016 – 2021
	Publish information on labor inspectorate funding, initial training provided to new labor inspectors, and whether unannounced inspections were conducted.	2009 – 2021
Coordination	Ensure that the Interministerial Commission to Fight Child Labor is able to carry out its intended mandate.	2020 – 2021
	Ensure that the Interministerial Committee to Prevent and Combat Trafficking in Persons is provided sufficient funding to be able to carry out its intended mandate.	2021
Government Policies	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement key policies related to child labor and publish results from activities implemented during the reporting period.	2017 – 2021
Social Programs	Significantly increase efforts to raise national awareness of human trafficking, including child trafficking.	2018 – 2021
	Ensure that facilities, including shelters, have adequate resources to assist victims of the worst forms of child labor.	2015 – 2021
	Expand existing programs to address the scope of the child labor problem.	2009 – 2021
	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 – 2021

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