

In 2022, Guinea-Bissau made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor.

The National Guard began training border officials on how to detect human trafficking situations and created grassroots committees within villages near border locations to aid in identifying human traffickers using illegal border crossings. The newly developed case management and referral system, under the lead of the National Institute for Women and Children, was also used by 28 institutions during the reporting period, and although the National Emergency Plan for the Prevention and Combat of Trafficking in Persons expired in 2021, it continued to be implemented and contributed toward the identification and reintegration of 198 child trafficking victims at the national and transnational levels. 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. Prohibitions against the commercial sexual exploitation of children do not meet international standards since the prostitution of children is not criminally prohibited in the country's legal framework. In addition, even though a new labor code was put into effect in 2022, 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 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

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, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS6), 2019. (2)

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 (3-6)
	Fishing (4,7)
Industry	Construction (7)
Services	Domestic work (3,4,8,9)
	Street work, including shoe-shining and vending (10)
	Working as mechanics, including maintaining and repairing automobiles (4,7)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Working in nightclubs, including dishwashing and custodial work (7,11)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (12,13)
	Forced labor in domestic work, agriculture, mining, and street work, including begging (8,9,13)

‡ 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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According to the latest national child labor survey, more than 169,200 children between the ages of 5 and 17 work; 85 percent of these children work in agriculture. (4) Organized networks of human traffickers affiliated with Koranic schools also 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 students, known as *talibés*, to beg on the streets for money and food. (8,13-15) Most *talibés* originate from the areas of Bafatá and Gabú in the eastern region of the country. (13,14,16) 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, particularly in the cities of Kolda and Ziguinchor. In addition, boys from Guinea-Bissau and from neighboring countries are forced to beg and harvest cashews domestically. (6,8,13) Furthermore, girls are subjected to forced labor in street vending and domestic work, and children in the Bijagós, an archipelago largely devoid of government and law enforcement presence, are vulnerable to sex trafficking. Children are also vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation in bars and hotels on mainland Guinea-Bissau. (9,13,15)

During the reporting period, school closures due to teacher strikes limited children's access to education. Reports also indicate that during the cashew harvesting season, children who assist their families are less likely to attend school. (6,11,17,18) Other educational barriers included inadequate school infrastructure and long distances to schools, particularly in rural areas. (5) In addition, in May 2022, the President of Guinea-Bissau dissolved parliament, and while parliamentary elections have been scheduled for June 2023, the government's ability to address the worst forms of child labor may have been impacted. (19,20)

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 minimum age protections that do not apply to children working without a contract.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	16	Articles 1, 3, 288, 347, 350, and 520 of the Labor Code (21)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 354 and 355 of the Labor Code (21)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 354 and 355 of the Labor Code (21)
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 (22,23)

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

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 2–4 and 15 of the Law to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking (23)
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 (22,23)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 3 and 7 of the Decree on Narcotic Substances (24)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	17	Article 31 of Law No. 4/99 (25)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 2 of Law No. 4/99 (25)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15‡	Articles 12 and 13 of the Education System Law (26)
Free Public Education	No		Article 12(2) of the Education System Law (26)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (26,27)

In 2022, a new Labor Code went into effect raising the minimum work age to 16; however, the law only applies to workers who perform work under a formal employment agreement, which does not conform to international standards that require all children to be protected by the minimum age to work. (21,28)

The law also does not sufficiently prohibit commercial sexual exploitation because the use of children in prostitution is not criminally prohibited. (22,23) In addition, 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. (26) Moreover, as the minimum age for work is 16, children age 15 are vulnerable to exploitative child labor because they are not required to attend school while also not legally permitted to work. (21,26)

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 & Activities
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). (5,7)
Ministry of the Interior's Public Order Police and National Guard	Enforce laws related to the worst forms of child labor, including child trafficking, and refer relevant cases to IMC and NGOs for referral to social services providers. (7)
Judicial Police's Women and Children Brigade	Investigates cases involving the worst forms of child labor, apart from child trafficking, and refers these to IMC and NGOs. Comprising 10 officers. (5,7,29)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, 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 insufficient allocation of financial and human resources.

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Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Labor Inspectors	33 (5)	24 (29)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (30)	Yes (30)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Unknown	Yes (7)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	156 (5)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (5)	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	Unknown	Unknown
Routine Inspections Targeted	No (5)	Unknown
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (30)	Yes (30)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (5)	Unknown
Complaint Mechanism Exists	No (5)	Yes (7)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	No (5)	Yes (7)

In 2022, the Ministry of Labor and Public Administration, along with the ILO, conducted a week-long training initiative for approximately 100 technicians from different government departments, trade unions, and employers; the trainings promoted actions related to Decent Work, such as addressing forced labor, child labor, and human trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation. Participants discussed various topics, including the minimum age for work. (31)

Reports indicate that the number of labor inspectors is insufficient to target the scope of the problem in the country. Although the government provides salaries to labor inspectors, there is no additional budget to conduct investigations, which severely hindered the Ministry of Labor and Public Administration's ability to enforce child labor laws. (7) Reports also indicate that labor inspectors often rely on their personal means, including using their own vehicles and paying for their own gas, to perform labor inspections. Furthermore, 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. (7) In 2022, there were no child labor specific inspections identified. (7)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, 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	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	No (5)	Yes (7)
Number of Investigations	0 (11)	8 (7)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	0 (5)	8 (7)
Number of Convictions	0 (11)	0 (7)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A (5)	0 (7)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (5)	Yes (7)

During the reporting period, the National Guard began training border officials on how to detect potential human trafficking situations and created grassroots committees within villages near border locations to aid in identifying human traffickers utilizing illegal border crossings. In addition, the National Guard conducted four separate human trafficking presentations on national radio, including on the identification and support available for human trafficking victims. (32) The Judicial Police created an anonymous hotline to identify child victims

of abuse, including victims of child labor violations, and an awareness campaign was conducted over the radio and in schools to inform the public about the hotline. (7) However, 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. (5,7,33,34)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism 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 the lack of an established stakeholder responsible for the standardized and consistent entry of cases into the referral and case management system.

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

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
Interministerial Commission to Fight Child Labor	Coordinates the government's efforts to prevent and eliminate child labor. (35) In 2022, held four meetings to validate the Decent Labor report. (36)

In 2022, under the lead of the National Institute for Women and Children (IMC), a referral and case management system implemented to improve coordination efforts was utilized by 28 institutions. A total of 515 cases were reported and managed within the system; however, the lack of an established stakeholder responsible for the standardized and consistent entry of data and the broad range of cases entered made it difficult to isolate child labor cases. (7)

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 & Activities
National Policy for the Protection of Children and Adolescents (2021–2032)	Guides the government's policies for addressing violence toward children, including the worst forms of child labor. (37) Although the plan has not yet been approved by the Council of Ministers, research indicated that it was implemented during the reporting period. (38)
National Emergency Plan for the Prevention and Combat of 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 the IMC with the collaboration of national and international NGOs and relevant government entities. (39) Although the plan officially expired in 2021, it continued to be implemented during the reporting period, including through the rescue and reintegration of 198 child trafficking victims at the national and transnational levels. In addition, awareness and advocacy activities on human trafficking issues, particularly those related to children, continued. (38)
Code of Conduct Against Sexual Exploitation in Tourism	Seeks to raise awareness of commercial sexual exploitation of children and child trafficking in Guinea-Bissau, including in the Bijagós Archipelago, Bubaque, São Domingos, and Bissau. (36) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the Code of Conduct Against Sexual Exploitation in Tourism during the reporting period.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, 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.

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Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Friends of the Child Association Shelters (<i>Associação dos Amigos da Criança</i>)†	Donor-funded shelters, with government support, in Bissau and Gabú. (32) Operated by a national NGO providing social services to vulnerable children, including victims of the worst forms of child labor. In 2022, conducted a campaign to identify Bissau-Guinean children found begging in Senegal. (7,32)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

† 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)

In 2022, the IOM completed a project supporting the development and implementation of a national strategic plan to prevent and protect victims of human trafficking. Outcomes included the capacity building of 60 border authorities and stakeholders on child trafficking and national referral mechanisms for the protection of victims. (7) The project also supported the return of 164 *talibé* children from Senegal and helped conduct a census of 780 *talibé* children throughout 22 Koranic schools. (7) However, reports suggest that the government did not conduct any national public awareness-raising campaigns on human trafficking, including child trafficking. (34) Reports also indicate that due to funding constraints, services provided by shelters may not have met quality-of-care standards. (41) 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 formal employment agreement.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that laws criminally prohibit the use of a child for prostitution.	2021 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
	Ensure that all nine years of basic education are free.	2015 – 2022
	Raise the compulsory education age from 15 to 16 to be consistent with the minimum age for employment.	2018 – 2022
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 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 – 2022
	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 – 2022
	Publish information on labor enforcement data for the reporting period, including the amount of funding provided to the labor inspectorate, the number of labor inspections conducted at worksite, the number of child labor violations, penalties imposed and collected for child labor violations, whether routine inspections were conducted and targeted, and whether unannounced inspections were conducted.	2009 – 2022
Coordination	Establish a stakeholder to be responsible for standardized and consistent data entry into the referral and case management system to ensure child labor cases can easily be identified.	2022
Government Policies	Ensure a policy that addresses all relevant worst forms of child labor, like the National Policy for the Protection of Children and Adolescents, is approved.	2022
	Ensure that activities are undertaken to implement the Code of Conduct Against Sexual Exploitation in Tourism and publish results from activities implemented during the reporting period.	2017 – 2022
Social Programs	Significantly increase efforts to raise national awareness of human trafficking, including child trafficking.	2018 – 2022
	Ensure that facilities, including shelters, have adequate resources to assist victims of the worst forms of child labor.	2015 – 2022
	Expand existing programs to address the scope of the child labor problem, including in street work, particularly begging, and agriculture.	2009 – 2022
	Enhance efforts to eliminate barriers and make education accessible for all children by improving school infrastructure and providing transportation, particularly in rural areas.	2019 – 2022

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