

Papua New Guinea

Government Policies and Programs to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The government has efforts underway through the National Education Plan to reform the country's educational system through the provision of universal elementary school access, and by increasing the number of students who continue into primary and secondary schools.¹⁹⁴⁵ The World Bank is also implementing an Education Development Loan project that provides textbooks in schools and increases educational opportunities for girls.¹⁹⁴⁶

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

In 1999, the ILO estimated that 17.6 percent of children between the ages of 10 and 14 years in Papua New Guinea were working.¹⁹⁴⁷ Child labor in the agricultural sector is a growing problem,¹⁹⁴⁸ and children under 12 years old are employed on commercial tea and coffee farms.¹⁹⁴⁹ Although it is not reported to be widespread, children are said to engage in prostitution, and there are allegations of men selling their young female relatives to work as prostitutes.¹⁹⁵⁰ It is unknown whether child soldiers are currently working, children under 18 years of age fought with the Bougainville Revolutionary Army, an armed opposition group, during the secessionist war on Bougainville in the late 1990s.¹⁹⁵¹

¹⁹⁴⁵ The National Education Plan was developed in 1995-96. The plan covers all sectors of the formal education system and introduces a new grade-level structure. See *Education in Papua New Guinea* at 11. See also Asian Development Bank, *Country Operational Strategy Study: Papua New Guinea*, March 1999, at www.adb.org/Documents/COSSs/png.pdf on 12/5/01.

¹⁹⁴⁶ World Bank, "Educational Development Project," at www4.worldbank.org/projects/Project.asp?pid'P004392 on 12/5/01.

¹⁹⁴⁷ *World Development Indicators 2001* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2001).

¹⁹⁴⁸ *Internationally Recognized Core Labor Standards in Papua New Guinea*, International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), report for the WTO General Council Review of the Trade Policies of Papua New Guinea (Geneva, November 15, 17, 1999) at www.icftu.org/displaydocument.asp?Index'991209325&Language'EN on 12/5/01.

¹⁹⁴⁹ Post-Courier/PINA Nius Online, "Child Labor Claimed at PNG Highlands Tea and Coffee Plantations," March 22, 2000, in *Pacific Islands Report*, at <http://166.122.164.43/archive/2000/March/03-23-14.htm> on 12/5/01.

¹⁹⁵⁰ *Looking Back, Thinking Forward: The Fourth Report on the Implementation of the Agenda for Action Adopted at the First World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Stockholm, Sweden, 28 August 1996* (Bangkok: ECPAT International, 2000), Section 7.1.

¹⁹⁵¹ Children under 18 years of age fought in the ranks of the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA), and children as young as 13 and 14 years old were reported to have been recruited. The BRA has since announced that it will review its recruitment policies and refrain from admitting children under 18 years old. See Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, *Child Soldiers Global Report 2001: Papua New Guinea*, at www.child-soldiers.org/report2001/countries/papua_new_guinea.html on 12/5/01.

Education is not compulsory or free in Papua New Guinea.¹⁹⁵² In 1997, the gross primary enrollment rate was 62.7 percent, with 66.4 percent of girls enrolled as opposed to 59.9 percent of boys.¹⁹⁵³ Primary school attendance rates are unavailable for Papua New Guinea. While enrollment rates indicate a level of commitment to education, they do not always reflect children's participation in school.¹⁹⁵⁴ Primary school dropout rates are high, particularly in rural areas, and less than 50 percent of children complete primary school.¹⁹⁵⁵

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Employment Act sets the minimum age for employment at 18 years, but children between the ages of 11 and 18 may work in family businesses with parental permission, a medical clearance, and a work permit from the labor office.¹⁹⁵⁶ The Constitution prohibits forced labor.¹⁹⁵⁷ The Summary Offences Act bans child prostitution, and the Criminal Code prohibits procuring or abducting women or girls for sexual relations.¹⁹⁵⁸

Papua New Guinea ratified both ILO Convention 138 and ILO Convention 182 on June 2, 2000.¹⁹⁵⁹

¹⁹⁵² *Education in Papua New Guinea*, Voluntary Service Organization [hereinafter *Education in Papua New Guinea*], 3, at www.vso.org.uk/png/education.pdf on 12/5/01.

¹⁹⁵³ UNESCO does not provide net enrollment statistics for Papua New Guinea, but the database includes a 1989 net primary enrollment rate of 73 percent from the UNESCO Institute of Statistics. See UNESCO, *Education for All: Year 2000 Assessment* (Paris, 2000) [CD-ROM].

¹⁹⁵⁴ For a more detailed discussion on the relationship between education statistics and work, see *Introduction* to this report.

¹⁹⁵⁵ Asian Development Bank, *Country Operational Strategy Study: Papua New Guinea*, March 1999, 4, at www.adb.org/Documents/COSs/png.pdf on 12/5/01. See also *Education in Papua New Guinea* at 3.

¹⁹⁵⁶ Information on the enforcement of child labor legislation is not available. See *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2000—Papua New Guinea* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of State, 2001) [hereinafter *Country Reports 2000*], Section 6d, at <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2000/eap/index.cfm?docid=759>.

¹⁹⁵⁷ Constitution of Papua New Guinea at www.vanuatu.usp.ac.fj/Paclawmat/PNG_legislation/Constitution.htm on 12/5/01.

¹⁹⁵⁸ *Human Rights Report: Papua New Guinea*, Protection Project Database, at www.protectionproject.org on 12/5/01. See also ECPAT, "Protection: Papua New Guinea," ECPAT Database at www.ecpat.net/eng/Ecpat_inter/projects/monitoring/online_database/.

¹⁹⁵⁹ ILOLEX database: Papua New Guinea at www.ilolex.ilo.ch on 12/5/01.

NOTE: Hard copies of all Web citations are on file.