

São Tomé and Príncipe

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

São Tomé and Príncipe's current educational development program was developed from the structural adjustment program implemented by the government and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). While the IMF has placed sharp spending constraints on the government, it has urged the São Tomé and Príncipe Government to increase the share of total spending allocated to education from 14 percent in 1998 to 21 percent by 2002. Emphasizing the need to improve access to education and training, especially for the poor and women, the plan calls on the government to: adopt an overall education development plan; improve its educational planning capacity; provide school supplies for the 4,000 poorest students; and, increase the share of elementary school spending in the overall education budget from 22 percent in 1998 to 30 percent in 2002.²²¹² School enrollment may have been affected by the suspension of a school meals program operated by the WFP in 1995-96.²²¹³ The program, which is scheduled to provide a mid-day meal to over 31,000 children in primary schools and kindergartens over a period of 180 days per year, was resumed in May 2000.²²¹⁴

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

Statistics on the number of working children under the age of 15 in São Tomé and Príncipe are unavailable, and there is limited information on the incidence of child labor. Children, sometimes at early ages, reportedly work in subsistence agriculture, on commercial farms, and in informal commerce.²²¹⁵

²²¹² Specific targets for the period 2000-2002 are to build or rehabilitate 60 primary school classrooms annually, hire and train 90 new primary school teachers annually, train and retrain 300 primary school teachers, extend the school day from four to seven hours, narrow disparities between rural and urban areas, increase the gross enrollment ratio from 70 to 90 percent, and lower the primary school dropout rate from 31 to 15 percent. See "São Tomé and Príncipe: Matrix of Policy Actions and Measures: 2000-2002," in International Monetary Fund, São Tomé and Príncipe, Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper [hereinafter "Matrix of Policy Actions and Measures"], at <http://www.imf.org/external/NP/prsp/2000/stp/01/stptable.pdf> on 11/30/01.

²²¹³ UN House in São Tomé and Príncipe, *Education*, at http://www.educationplanet.com/search/redirect?id'62903&mfcoun't'9&mfw'sao_tome_and_principe&startval'0 on 11/30/01.

²²¹⁴ "Projected 2002 Needs for WFP Projects and Operations," São Tomé and Príncipe, in *World Food Program*, Country Brief, São Tomé and Príncipe, at <http://www.wfp.org/countrybrief/indexcountry.asp?country'79#> on 11/30/01.

²²¹⁵ *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2000—São Tomé and Príncipe* (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/af/index.cfm?docid'734>.

Education is compulsory for four years.²²¹⁶ Primary school enrollment and attendance rates are unavailable for São Tomé and Príncipe. The educational system has a shortage of classrooms, insufficiently trained and underpaid teachers, inadequate textbooks and materials, high rates of repetition, poor educational planning and management, and a lack of community involvement in school management.²²¹⁷ Domestic financing of the school system is lacking, leaving the system highly dependent on foreign financing.²²¹⁸

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The minimum age for employment is 18 years and is generally respected by employers.²²¹⁹ The Ministry of Justice and Labor is responsible for enforcing labor laws.²²²⁰ Forced and bonded labor, including by children, is prohibited and not known to exist.²²²¹ São Tomé and Príncipe has not ratified either ILO Convention 138 or ILO Convention 182.²²²²

²²¹⁶ Plans to extend primary school education from 4 to 6 years have yet to be implemented. See *Preliminary Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, Ms. Katarina Toma-evski*, UN Document E/CN.4/1999/4913 (Geneva: UN Commission on Human Rights, January 1999). See also Common Country Assessment, prepared by the UN agencies in São Tomé and Príncipe, UN House in São Tomé and Príncipe [hereinafter Common Country Assessment], at http://www.educationplanet.com/search/redirect?id'62903&mfcount'9&mfkw'sao_tome_and_principe&startval'0 on 11/30/01.

²²¹⁷ Common Country Assessment.

²²¹⁸ Ibid.

²²¹⁹ *Country Reports 2000* at Section 6d.

²²²⁰ Ibid.

²²²¹ Ibid.

²²²² ILO, ILOLEX database on International Labour Standards, São Tomé and Príncipe, at <http://www.ilolex.ilo.ch:1567/english/iloquery.htm> on 11/27/01.

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