

Niger

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

The Government of Niger has been a member of ILO-IPEC since 2000.¹⁸¹⁸ Since then, ILO-IPEC has launched two projects aimed at ending child labor on grain farms and at the Niamey slaughterhouse, and reintegrating child workers into schools. Two additional ILO-IPEC programs are being planned in Niger which will target street children and children working in gold mines.¹⁸¹⁹ In 1998, ILO-IPEC carried out a survey on working children to provide the basis for a government action plan against child labor.¹⁸²⁰ The government is conducting a study on trafficking as part of a legal modernization effort.¹⁸²¹ UNICEF is implementing a social policy program that supports government efforts against the worst forms of child labor.¹⁸²²

The Government of Niger is also working with various agencies and NGOs to improve its primary education sector. Education is also expected to be a cornerstone of the country's poverty reduction initiative under the International Monetary Fund.¹⁸²³ The government has set aside USD 4.2 million for the purchase of school supplies to promote schooling.¹⁸²⁴ UNICEF is also supporting government education efforts through its Basic Education and African Girls' Education Initiative programs, which aim to improve school enrollment rates, promote literacy, and improve the quality of education, particularly among girls.¹⁸²⁵

¹⁸¹⁸ ILO/IPEC, "All About IPEC: Program Countries," at http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipecc/about/countries/t_country.htm on 12/4/01.

¹⁸¹⁹ Five hundred underage workers, half of them girls, are targeted in the grain farm project, and about 350 working minors will be beneficiaries through the slaughterhouse project. See IRIN News, "Niger: Child Labour Project Launched," UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, September 13, 2001 [hereinafter "Niger: Child Labour Project Launched"], at www.irinnews.org/ on 11/29/01.

¹⁸²⁰ ILO/IPEC, "Francophone Africa: New IPEC Initiatives Make Significant Inroads," at www.ilo.org/public/English/standards/ipecc/about/factsheet/facts14.htm on 11/29/01.

¹⁸²¹ *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2000—Niger* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of State, 2001) [hereinafter *Country Reports 2000*], Section 6f, at <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2000/af/index.cfm?docid=689>.

¹⁸²² UNICEF, "Programmes in Niger," Country Profiles [hereinafter "Programmes in Niger"], at www.unicef.org/programme/countryprog/wacro/niger/support.htm on 11/29/01.

¹⁸²³ U.S. Embassy—Niamey, unclassified telegram no. 1645, October 2001.

¹⁸²⁴ IRIN News, "Niger: Over USD 4.2 Million for School Supplies," UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, October 3, 2001, at www.irinnews.org/ on 11/29/01.

¹⁸²⁵ "Programmes in Niger."

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

In 2000, UNICEF estimated that 70.1 percent of children between the ages of 5 and 14 in Niger were working.¹⁸²⁶ Child labor occurs mainly in remote villages where children work on family farms gathering water or firewood, pounding grain, tending animals, or working in the fields.¹⁸²⁷ Children as young as 6 years old are reported to work on grain farms in the southwest.¹⁸²⁸ Children are also employed as apprentices to artisans, as domestic laborers, and as street beggars.¹⁸²⁹ Gold mines in Tillaberi and the main slaughterhouse in Niamey also employ children.¹⁸³⁰

Child prostitution is a present and growing problem in Niger, and it sometimes occurs with the permission of family members.¹⁸³¹ Children from Niger are also trafficked to other African countries, including Algeria,¹⁸³² and there are reports of children from Benin being trafficked to Niger.¹⁸³³

¹⁸²⁶ According to the UNICEF survey, 61 percent of children between the ages of 5 and 9, and 83 percent of children between the ages of 10 and 14 work. The statistics includes children working only, children working and studying, and children that carry out household chores for more than 4 hours per day. Republic of Niger and UNICEF, *Enquête a indicateurs multiples de la fin de la décennie* (draft) (MICS2), November 2000 [hereinafter *Enquête a indicateurs multiples de la fin de la décennie*], at www.ucw-project.org/resources/index.html on 11/29/01). In 1999, the ILO estimated that 44 percent of children between the ages of 10 and 14 years were working. See *World Development Indicators 2001* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2001) [CD-ROM] [hereinafter *World Development Indicators 2001*].

¹⁸²⁷ U.S. Embassy–Niamey, unclassified telegram no. 2219, July 2000 [hereinafter unclassified telegram 2219]. See also U.S. Embassy–Niamey, unclassified telegram no. 0822, February 1998 [hereinafter unclassified telegram 0822].

¹⁸²⁸ “Niger: Child Labour Project Launched”.

¹⁸²⁹ Unclassified telegram 0822.

¹⁸³⁰ “Niger: Child Labour Project Launched.”

¹⁸³¹ Among some ethnic groups, marriages for girls as young as 10 or 12 years are arranged, and the girls are then sent to join their husband’s family under the guardianship of the mother-in-law, who may then force them into prostitution. See ECPAT International Database, *CSEC Overview: Niger*, at www.ecpat.net/eng/Ecpat_inter/projects/monitoring/online_database/ on 11/29/01. See also *Country Reports 2000*. See also *Human Rights Report: Niger*, as cited in the Protection Project Database [hereinafter *Human Rights Report*], at www.protectionproject.org on 12/3/01.

¹⁸³² *Human Rights Report*.

¹⁸³³ Dr. Rima Salah, *Child Trafficking in West and Central Africa: An Overview*, paper presented by the UNICEF Regional Director for West and Central Africa at the First Pan African Conference on Human Trafficking in Abuja, February 19-23, 2001, at www.unicef.org/media/newsnotes/africchildtraffick.pdf on 11/29/01.

Primary education is compulsory for six years. The primary school enrollment and attendance rates are low, particularly for girls.¹⁸³⁴ In 1997, the gross primary enrollment rate was 29.3 percent, and in 1996, the net primary enrollment rate was 24.5 percent.¹⁸³⁵ About 60 percent of children who finish primary schools are boys, as the majority of girls are rarely attend school for more than a few years.¹⁸³⁶ Children are often forced to work rather than attend school, particularly during planting or harvest periods. In addition, nomadic children in the north of the country often do not have access to schools.¹⁸³⁷

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Labor Code sets the minimum age for employment at 14 years, although children under 14 may work with special authorization. Children between the ages of 14 and 18 years may not work for more than 4.5 hours per day or in industrial jobs.¹⁸³⁸ The Labor Code prohibits forced labor, except for work by convicted prisoners.¹⁸³⁹ Nigerienne law does not specifically prohibit child prostitution or trafficking, although the Penal Code criminalizes the procurement of a minor for the purpose of prostitution.¹⁸⁴⁰ Niger ratified ILO Convention 138 on December 4, 1978 and ILO Convention 182 on October 23, 2000.¹⁸⁴¹

¹⁸³⁴ *Enquête a indicateurs multiples de la fin de la décennie* at 26. See also *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2000: Niger* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of State, 2001), Section 5, at <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2000/af/index.cfm?docid=689>.

¹⁸³⁵ In 1997, the gross primary enrollment rate was 22.6 percent for girls and 36 percent for boys. In 1996, the net primary enrollment rate was 18.6 for girls and 30.4 percent for boys. *World Development Indicators 2001*.

¹⁸³⁶ The female literacy rate is 7 percent, compared with a rate of 18 percent for boys. See *Country Reports 2000* at Section 5.

¹⁸³⁷ Unclassified telegram 2219.

¹⁸³⁸ Unclassified telegram 0822.

¹⁸³⁹ *Country Reports 2000*, Section 6c.

¹⁸⁴⁰ The penalty for procuring a minor is 2 to 5 years imprisonment and a fine of 50,000 to 5,000,000 francs (USD 68 to 6,757). See Criminal Code, Article 292, as cited in the Protection Project Database, Niger, January 2001, at www.protectionproject.org on 12/3/01. See also *Country Reports 2000*, Section 5. See also currency conversion at <http://www.carosta.de/frames/convert.htm> on 2/20/02.

¹⁸⁴¹ ILOLEX database: Niger at www.ilolex.ch on 11/29/01.

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