

Equatorial Guinea

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

In May 2000, the Government of Equatorial Guinea requested assistance from the ILO regional office to improve the country's adherence to international labor standards, including those related to child labor.¹³¹⁵ The country also has government-sponsored and private programs to provide education for at-risk children.¹³¹⁶ In September 2002, the government ratified a National Education for All Plan 2002-2015, in which it pledged to give priority to basic and girls' education.¹³¹⁷ The government provides assistance to child victims of trafficking, and is conducting a radio campaign to raise awareness about the minimum age of employment.¹³¹⁸

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

In 2000, the ILO estimated that 32 percent of children ages 10 to 14 years in Equatorial Guinea were working.¹³¹⁹ Children primarily work on family farms, in street vending¹³²⁰ and in grocery stores.¹³²¹ There is evidence that children engage in prostitution,¹³²² particularly in the capital city.¹³²³ Children are trafficked within the country and from neighboring countries such as Nigeria

¹³¹⁵ The regional ILO representative reported in 2000 that progress was being made on child labor issues in cooperation with the Ministry of Labor. See U.S. Embassy- Yaounde, *unclassified telegram no. 3123*, July 2000.

¹³¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³¹⁷ Integrated Regional Information Networks, "Equatorial Guinea: Basic Education Plan Ratified", IRINnews.org, [online], September 26, 2002 [cited October 2, 2002]; available from <http://www.irinnews.org/print.asp?ReportID=30109>.

¹³¹⁸ U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2002: Equatorial Guinea*, Washington, D.C., June 5, 2002, 46 [cited December 11, 2002]; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2002/10679.htm>.

¹³¹⁹ World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2002* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2002.

¹³²⁰ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2001: Equatorial Guinea*, Washington, D.C., March 4, 2002, 234-36, Section 6d [cited August 29, 2002]; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/af/8367.htm>.

¹³²¹ UN Integrated Regional Information Network, *Equatorial Guinea; Minors Grounded, Prohibited from Working*, Africa News Service, Inc., [online] September 1, 2001 [cited September 3, 2002]; available from <http://www.globalmarch.org/clns/daily-news/september/sep-1-2001.html>.

¹³²² *Ibid.*

¹³²³ afrol.com, *Child labour increasing in Equatorial Guinea*, [online] November 21, 2001 [cited September 3, 2002]; available from http://www.afrol.com/News/eqg023_child_labour.htm. See also afrol.com, *Prostitution booms in Equatorial Guinea as education sector folds up*, [online] October 12, 2001 [cited September 3, 2002]; available from http://www.afrol.com/News/eqg013_prostitution.htm.

and Benin for bonded labor (including domestic service) in Equatorial Guinea's cities.¹³²⁴ Some children are also trafficked through Equatorial Guinea for domestic labor in Gabon.¹³²⁵

Education is free and compulsory until the age of 14.¹³²⁶ In 1998, the gross primary enrollment rate was 130.8 percent, and the net primary enrollment rate was 82.7 percent.¹³²⁷ Attendance rates are not available for Equatorial Guinea.¹³²⁸ While enrollment rates indicate a level of commitment to education, they do not always reflect children's participation in school.¹³²⁹ Late entry into the school system and high drop-out rates are common, and girls are more likely than boys to drop out of school.¹³³⁰

Child Labor Law and Enforcement

Labor laws set the minimum age for employment at 14 years, but children as young as 13 years can work in light jobs on the condition that these do not affect their health, growth, or school attendance. Children who are 12 years old may work in agriculture or craft making.¹³³¹ Children under 16 years are prohibited from work that might harm their health, safety or morals.¹³³² In 2001, the government passed a measure banning all children under the age of 17 years from being on the streets after 11 p.m. and from working, a measure which the Ministry of the Interior stated was taken to curb growing levels of prostitution, delinquency and alcoholism among young people employed in bars and grocery stores and as street hawkers. The measure calls for the fining of

¹³²⁴ U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report: Equatorial Guinea*, 46. See also Agence France Presse, *Nigeria to bring child labourers home from Gabon, E. Guinea*, [online] March 29, 2002 [cited September 3, 2002]; available from <http://globalmarch.org/clns/daily-news/march-2002/march-29-2002.htm>.

¹³²⁵ U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report: Equatorial Guinea*, 46.

¹³²⁶ According to the State Department, this measure is not enforced. See U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports-2001: Equatorial Guinea*, 233-44, Section 5.

¹³²⁷ World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2002*.

¹³²⁸ According to the representative of UNICEF in Equatorial Guinea in 2001, 50 percent of school-age children did not attend primary school. See afrol.com, *Child labour increasing*.

¹³²⁹ For a more detailed discussion on the relationship between education statistics and work, see the preface to this report.

¹³³⁰ UN Economic and Social Council Commission on Human Rights, *Question of the Violation of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in Any Part of the World: Report on the Human Rights Situation in the Republic of Equatorial Guinea submitted by the Special Representative of the Commission, Mr. Gustavo Gallón*, pursuant to Commission resolution 2000/19, E/CN.4/2001/38, United Nations, Geneva, January 16, 2001, 25. Pregnancy and the expectation that girls will assist with agricultural work result in lower education attainment levels for girls. See U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Equatorial Guinea*, 233-44, Section 5.

¹³³¹ For a 12-year-old to work, professional organizations of workers and authorities within the Ministry of Labor must be consulted in advance. See U.S. Embassy- Yaounde, *unclassified telegram no. 3123*.

¹³³² *Ibid.*

parents as punishment for violations.¹³³³ Forced or bonded labor by children is prohibited.¹³³⁴ The country has some laws against trafficking of persons but they are rarely employed.¹³³⁵

The Ministry of Labor corps of 50 national labor inspectors enforces labor laws.¹³³⁶ However, the government devotes little attention to the rights of children, and fails to enforce minimum age laws for work or laws mandating education up to the age of eighteen.¹³³⁷

The Government of Equatorial Guinea ratified ILO Convention 138 on June 12, 1985 and ILO Convention 182 on August 13, 2001.¹³³⁸

¹³³³ UN Integrated Regional Information Network, *Equatorial Guinea; Minors Grounded*.

¹³³⁴ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Equatorial Guinea*, 234-36, Section 6d.

¹³³⁵ U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report: Equatorial Guinea*, 46.

¹³³⁶ U.S. Embassy- Yaounde, *unclassified telegram no. 3123*.

¹³³⁷ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Equatorial Guinea*, 233-46, Sections 5 and 6d.

¹³³⁸ ILO, *Ratifications by Country*, in ILOLEX, [database online] [cited September 5, 2002]; available from <http://ilolex.ilo.ch:1567/english/newratframeE.htm>.