

The Gambia

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

The Government of the Gambia began implementing an education initiative in 1998, with USD 15 million in loan support from the World Bank. The project will last until 2005 and is intended to increase the gross enrollment rate to 90 percent, improve educational opportunities for girls, strengthen basic education curricula, and improve teacher training.¹⁴⁷⁰ The government's education efforts are also supported through a joint project with UNICEF which began in February 1999 and will end in 2003.¹⁴⁷¹ Through the 1990s, spending on education increased from 15 to 21 percent of government expenditures, and the share of the education budget devoted to primary education increased from 38 to 45 percent.¹⁴⁷²

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

In 2000, UNICEF estimated that 26.9 percent of the children ages 5 to 14 years in the Gambia were working.¹⁴⁷³ Children in rural areas mainly work on family farms and assist with housework; many children in urban areas work as street vendors or taxi and bus assistants.¹⁴⁷⁴ Other sectors where children ages 14 to 17 years are known to work are carpentry, sewing, masonry, plumbing,

¹⁴⁷⁰ The 1998 project is the continuation of an education program that began in 1988 in the Gambia. World Bank, *Project Appraisal Document on a Proposed Credit in the Amount of SDR 15.0 Million to the Republic of the Gambia for a Third Education Sector Project in Support of the First Phase of the Third Education Sector Program*, No. 17903-GM, August 7, 1998, 5. See also World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2002* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2002. See also World Bank, *Education and Health in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Review of Sector-Wide Approaches*, The Gambia Education Case Study, January 2001, Annex 7, 107. A similar program to the one discussed above implemented in February 1999 as a joint project between UNICEF and the government of the Gambia. This project spans 1999-2003 and encompasses identical goals to those already mentioned. For further information, see UNICEF and Government of the Gambia, *Programme of Cooperation 1999-2003*, 31-34 [cited August 22, 2002]; available from <http://www.ungambia.gm/unicef/pdf/mpopart2.pdf>.

¹⁴⁷¹ UNICEF and Government of the Gambia, *Programme of Cooperation 1999-2003*.

¹⁴⁷² Ibid.

¹⁴⁷³ Children who are working in some capacity include children who have performed any paid or unpaid work for someone who is not a member of the household, who have performed more than four hours of housekeeping chores in the household, or who have performed other family work. UNICEF, *The Gambia Draft Report Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2000: Standard Tables for Gambia*, New York, 2000, 64 [cited November 7, 2002]; available from <http://www.childinfo.org/MICS2/newreports/gambia/GAMBIETables.pdf>.

¹⁴⁷⁴ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2001: The Gambia*, Washington, D.C., March 4, 2002, 301-03, Section 6d [cited December 12, 2002]; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/af/8377.html>.

tailoring, and mechanics.¹⁴⁷⁵ Some children work in commercial sexual exploitation.¹⁴⁷⁶ Sex tourism is a problem in the Gambia and involves both boys and girls, although its existence is not recognized by the government.¹⁴⁷⁷ Many girls in rural areas leave school to work, and some migrate to urban areas seeking domestic or other employment.¹⁴⁷⁸ A popular media source reported that five foreigners were deported by the police in 2001 for trafficking young girls into the Gambia and employing them as commercial sex workers.¹⁴⁷⁹

The Constitution mandates free and compulsory primary education to 8 years of age, but a lack of resources and educational infrastructure has made implementation difficult.¹⁴⁸⁰ One obstacle to education was removed in 1998 when the President of the Gambia ordered the termination of fees for the first six years of schooling.¹⁴⁸¹ In 1998, the gross primary enrollment rate was 81.4 percent and the net primary enrollment rate was 60.9 percent.¹⁴⁸² Girls make up about 40 percent of primary school students. Enrollment of girls is low in rural areas where cultural factors and poverty dissuade parents from sending girls to school.¹⁴⁸³ Primary school attendance rates are unavailable for the Gambia. While enrollment rates indicate a level of commitment to education, they do not always reflect children's participation in school.¹⁴⁸⁴ Approximately 20 percent of school-age children attend Koranic schools, which usually have a restricted curriculum.¹⁴⁸⁵

¹⁴⁷⁵ U.S. Embassy- Banjul, *unclassified telegram no. 1032*, October 2002.

¹⁴⁷⁶ UNICEF, *Country Profile: UNICEF in The Gambia, Programme Cycle: 1999-2003*, [cited August 22, 2002]; available from <http://www.ungambia.gm/unicef/profile.html>. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: The Gambia*, 301-03, Section 6d. See also Saihou Mballow, *Sex Trafficking in the Gambia, West Africa*, ECPAT News, [online] March 2000 [cited August 22, 2002]; available from <http://www.dreamwater.net/ecpatusa/enews1.html>.

¹⁴⁷⁷ ECPAT International, *Gambia*, in ECPAT International, [database online] [cited November 8, 2002], "Child Prostitution"; available from http://www.ecpat.net/eng/Ecpat_inter/projects/monitoring/online_database/Countries.asp?anCountryID=62&CountryProfile=facts,affiliation,humarights&CSEC=Otherwise,Prostitution,Pronography,trafficking&Implement=Coordination_cooperation,Prevention,Protection,Recovery,ChildParticipation&NationalPlans=National_plans_of_action&orgWorkCSEC=orgworkCSEC&DisplayBy=optDisplayCategory&GetcategoryName=Prostitution.

¹⁴⁷⁸ UNICEF, *Country Profile*.

¹⁴⁷⁹ allAfrica.com, *Banjul Deports Three Foreigners Over Girl Trafficking*, (This Day, Lagos), [online] November 8, 2001 [cited November 28, 2001]; available from <http://www.allafrica.com/stories/20011080033.htm>.

¹⁴⁸⁰ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: The Gambia, 300-01, Section 5*. See also UNICEF and Government of the Gambia, *Programme of Cooperation 1999-2003*.

¹⁴⁸¹ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: The Gambia*, 300-01, Section 5.

¹⁴⁸² The gross primary enrollment rate increased from 63.9 percent in 1990 to 81.4 percent in 1998. *World Bank, World Development Indicators 2002*. However, according to Government of the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) statistics, in 1999/2000 the gross enrollment rate for primary school was 72 percent and for girls was 47 percent. See also United Kingdom Department for International Development, *The Gambia: The Gambian ICT Distance Education Programme*, [cited August 22, 2002]; available from <http://www.imfundo.org/projects/gambia.htm>.

¹⁴⁸³ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: The Gambia*, 300-01, Section 5.

¹⁴⁸⁴ For a more detailed description on the relationship between education statistics and work, see the preface to this report.

¹⁴⁸⁵ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: The Gambia*, 300-01, Section 5.

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Gambia's statutory minimum age for employment is 18 years, but it is reported that in practice, children often begin work at a younger age.¹⁴⁸⁶ The legal framework governing child labor in the Gambia is limited, and there are no laws that restrict the sectors in which children can work.¹⁴⁸⁷ There is no formal mechanism that specifically ensures compliance with child labor standards.¹⁴⁸⁸ Employee labor cards list employee ages with the Labor Commissioner, but enforcement inspections rarely take place.¹⁴⁸⁹ The Criminal Code prohibits procuring a girl under 21 years of age for the purposes of prostitution, either in the Gambia or outside of the country.¹⁴⁹⁰ The Gambia has arrested and deported child traffickers.¹⁴⁹¹

The Government of the Gambia ratified ILO Convention 138 on September 4, 2000 and ILO Convention 182 on July 3, 2001.¹⁴⁹²

¹⁴⁸⁶ Ibid., 301-03, Section 6d.

¹⁴⁸⁷ U.S. Embassy- Banjul, *unclassified telegram no. 1032*.

¹⁴⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸⁹ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: The Gambia*, 301-03, Section 6d.

¹⁴⁹⁰ Government of the Gambia, *Criminal Code, 1964*, Article 129 [cited December 12, 2002]; available from <http://www.protectionproject.org>.

¹⁴⁹¹ Several Nigerians trafficking girls into the Gambia were expelled in November 2001. See allAfrica.com, *Banjul Deports Three Foreigners Over Girl Trafficking*. A tourist was arrested and extradited for having sex with young girls. See Mballow, *Sex Trafficking in the Gambia*.

¹⁴⁹² ILO, *Ratifications by Country*, in ILOLEX, [online database] [cited August 22, 2002]; available from <http://ilolex.ilo.ch:1567/english/newratframeE.htm>.