

Guinea

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

In 1997, the Government of Guinea held a workshop to raise awareness about child labor, and with the help of the ILO and UNICEF, established a Child Labor Steering Committee chaired by the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Promotion of Women and Children (MSAPWC). Following the workshop, UNICEF financed an information consolidation project to collect all existing information on child labor,¹⁶⁰⁸ and afterwards, a synthesis document detailing the existing information was published in 1998. Since the border conflicts in 2000, however, the steering committee's regular meetings have come to a halt, and the government's budget priorities have shifted more heavily toward national defense.¹⁶⁰⁹ With the exception of a few government-supported sensitization programs, such as the MSAPWC children's rights campaign with UNICEF, most current child labor initiatives are implemented by NGOs independent of government support.¹⁶¹⁰ The government admittedly lacks the capacity to take progressive steps to combat child labor,¹⁶¹¹ and in 2002, the Ministry of Social Affairs requested technical assistance from ILO-IPEC to address the problem.¹⁶¹²

In 1990, the Government of Guinea initiated the Education Sector Adjustment Program to improve the quality of the education system.¹⁶¹³ The reform program is ongoing, and the government is continuing to commit funds for teacher training, school construction and the provision of books and materials.¹⁶¹⁴ UNICEF and USAID are working with the government to implement youth programs and education initiatives. UNICEF is promoting youth participation in regional education conferences, as well as working to provide refugee children and other war-affected youth with access to education.¹⁶¹⁵ USAID is assisting the Ministry of Education to implement its primary

¹⁶⁰⁸ Ibrahim Yansane and Silvia Pasti, UNICEF-Guinea officials, interview with USDOL official, August 13, 2002.

¹⁶⁰⁹ Ibid. See also Aliou Barry, *Travail des Enfants en Guinée: Synthèse des données disponibles et constats de terrain*, STAT-VIEW Association, Conakry, January 1998.

¹⁶¹⁰ Bafode Keita and Camara Sarang Seck, Ministry of Social Affairs and the Promotion of Women and Children, interview with USDOL official, August 13, 2002. See also Yansane and Pasti, interview, August 13, 2002. See also U.S. Embassy- Conakry, *unclassified telegram no. 2368*, 2001.

¹⁶¹¹ Keita and Seck, interview, August 13, 2002.

¹⁶¹² Bruce Mariama Aribot, Ministry of Social Affairs and the Promotion of Women and Children, letter to the Geneva Director of ILO-IPEC, 2002.

¹⁶¹³ UNESCO, *Education for All 2000 Assessment: Country Reports - Guinea*, prepared by Ministry of Pre-University Level Teaching and Civil Education, pursuant to UN General Assembly Resolution 52/84, 2000, [cited December 27, 2002]; available from <http://www2.unesco.org/wef/countryreports/guinea/contents.html#cont>.

¹⁶¹⁴ U.S. Embassy- Conakry, *unclassified telegram no. 2368*. See also Mohamed Fofana, USAID, Natural Resources Management, interview with USDOL official, August 12, 2002.

¹⁶¹⁵ Yansane and Pasti, interview, August 13, 2002. See also UNICEF, *Donor Update: Guinea, May 29, 2002*, [cited September 3, 2002]; available from <http://www.unicef.org/emerg/Country/Guinea/020529.PDF>.

education reforms.¹⁶¹⁶ In addition, in 2001, the World Bank began implementing a USD 70 million loan program to assist the government's education reform efforts.¹⁶¹⁷

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

In 2000, the ILO estimated that 31.1 percent of children ages 10 to 14 years in Guinea were working.¹⁶¹⁸ Children begin working beside their parents at a young age, often at 5 years in rural areas.¹⁶¹⁹ The majority of working children are found in the domestic or informal sectors, carrying out activities such as subsistence farming, petty commerce, fishing, and small-scale mining.¹⁶²⁰ Children also work in gold and diamond mines, granite and sand quarries, and as apprentices to mechanics, electricians, and plumbers, among others professions.¹⁶²¹

There is no statistical data available on the number of street children in Guinea, although children work in the streets selling cheap goods for traders, carrying baggage or shining shoes.¹⁶²²

Commercial sexual exploitation of children occurs and is on the rise.¹⁶²³ While there have been scattered reports of trafficking in children, there is no available information on the extent of the problem. In 2000, UNICEF reported incidents of trafficking among refugee populations in four prefectures in Guinea's forest region.¹⁶²⁴ In July 2000, 33 young Nigerian girls destined for Europe were released to the Nigerian Embassy by Guinean officials.¹⁶²⁵ Furthermore, internal

¹⁶¹⁶ USAID projects include an Interactive Radio Program that offers teacher training in rural areas; a Community Participation Program; and a Girls' Education Program effort to boost female enrollment rates. See Fofana, USAID interview, August 12, 2002. See also USAID, *Education*, [cited September 3, 2002]; available from <http://www.usaid.gov/gn/education/background/index.htm>.

¹⁶¹⁷ World Bank, *Education for All Projects*, [online] 2002 [cited July 31, 2002]; available from <http://www4.worldbank.org/sprojects/Project.asp?pid=P050046>.

¹⁶¹⁸ World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2002* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2002. In 1997, the Ministry of Planning estimated that about 48 percent of children under the age of 15 were working. These children account for nearly 20 percent of the total working population and 26 percent of all agricultural workers. The Ministry of Planning estimates also suggested that child labor is much more prevalent in rural than urban areas. The Ministry estimated that in rural areas, approximately 66 percent of children ages 7 to 14 and 91 percent ages 15 to 19 were working. In urban areas, the numbers were approximately 19 percent and 50 percent, respectively. U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2001: Guinea*, Washington, D.C., March 4, 2002, 345-49, [cited September 3, 2002]; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/af/8383.htm>.

¹⁶¹⁹ UNICEF, *Situation Des Enfants et Des Femmes, Programme De Cooperation 2002-2006, Republique de Guinee*, Conakry, 2000, 35.

¹⁶²⁰ U.S. Embassy- Conakry, *unclassified telegram no. 1857*, 1998. See also UNICEF, *Situation Des Enfants et Des Femmes*, 83-84.

¹⁶²¹ UNICEF, *Situation Des Enfants et Des Femmes*, 84.

¹⁶²² U.S. Embassy- Conakry, *unclassified telegram no. 2368*. See also UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Initial Reports Awaited from States Parties for 1992*, CRC/C/3/Add.48, prepared by Government of Guinea, pursuant to Article 44 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, November 20, 1996, para. 116-17.

¹⁶²³ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Initial Reports of States Parties: Guinea*, para. 131. See also UNICEF, *Situation Des Enfants et Des Femmes*, 84-85.

¹⁶²⁴ UNICEF, *Situation Des Enfants et Des Femmes*, 85.

¹⁶²⁵ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Guinea*, 347-49, Section 6f.

trafficking occurs from rural to urban areas.¹⁶²⁶ Children may also have worked as volunteer soldiers during the recent border attacks, but the reports cannot be fully corroborated.¹⁶²⁷

Public education is free¹⁶²⁸ and compulsory for six years, from the age of 7 to 13 years.¹⁶²⁹ In 1998, the gross primary enrollment rate was 58.9 percent, and the net primary enrollment rate was 45.7 percent.¹⁶³⁰ Enrollment remains substantially lower among girls than boys. In 1998, the gross primary enrollment rate was 45.5 percent for girls, compared to 71.9 percent for boys.¹⁶³¹ In 1999, primary school attendance was 40 percent.¹⁶³² Children, particularly girls, may not attend school or drop-out in order to assist their parents with domestic work or agriculture,¹⁶³³ and in general, enrollment rates are lower in rural areas.¹⁶³⁴ Government resources for education are limited; there are not enough school facilities to adequately serve the population of school-age children, and the availability of school supplies and equipment is poor.¹⁶³⁵

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Labor Code sets the minimum age for employment at 16 years, although children under the age of 16 can work with an authority's consent.¹⁶³⁶ Based on the Labor Code, apprentices may begin to work at 14 years of age. Workers under the age of 18 are not permitted to work at night or work more than 10 consecutive hours.¹⁶³⁷ The Labor Code also prohibits forced or bonded labor and

¹⁶²⁶ U.S. Embassy- Conakry, *unclassified telegram no. 2368*.

¹⁶²⁷ The volunteers were self-organized groups formed by villagers to combat border insurgencies. Although the groups were not officially part of the Guinean military, the army provided guns. Multiple sources stated that children were most likely involved. See Yansane and Pasti, interview, August 13, 2002. See also Guinean Human Rights Organization, interview with USDOL official, August 12, 2002. See also U.S. Embassy- Conakry, *unclassified telegram no. 2704*, 2001.

¹⁶²⁸ Republic of Guinea, *Rapport relatif au principe de l'abolition effective du travail des enfants*, Conakry, September 4-8, 2000, 3.

¹⁶²⁹ UNESCO, *National Education Systems - Guinea*, [cited October 11, 2002]; available from http://www.uis.unesco.org/statsen/statistics/yearbook/tables/Table3_1.html.

¹⁶³⁰ World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2002*.

¹⁶³¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶³² Ministry of Pre-University Level Teaching and Civil Education, *Schooling in Guinea, Findings from the GDHS-2 1999*, Conakry, Guinea, January 17, 2001, 17.

¹⁶³³ UNICEF, *Situation Des Enfants et Des Femmes*, 70. See also Guinean Teacher's Union (SLECG/FSPE), interview with USDOL official, August 12, 2002.

¹⁶³⁴ Fofana, USAID interview, August 12, 2002.

¹⁶³⁵ UNICEF, *Situation Des Enfants et Des Femmes*, 68. According to Teacher's Union representatives, it is common for classes to run as large as 100 students, with only one teacher. See Guinean Teacher's Union (SLECG/FSPE), interview, August 12, 2002.

¹⁶³⁶ *Code du Travail de la Republique de Guinee, 1988*, Article 5.

¹⁶³⁷ The penalty for an infraction of the law is a fine of 30,000 to 600,000 GFN (USD 16 to 314). See *Ibid.*, Articles 31 and 145, 48. For currency conversion see FX Converter, [online] [cited November 12, 2002]; available from <http://www.carosta.de/frames/convert.htm>.

hazardous work by children under 18 years.¹⁶³⁸ Guinea's Penal Code prohibits trafficking of persons, the exploitation of vulnerable persons for unpaid or underpaid labor,¹⁶³⁹ and procurement or solicitation for the purposes of prostitution.¹⁶⁴⁰ The official age for voluntary recruitment or conscription into the armed forces is 18 years.¹⁶⁴¹

The government has acknowledged that the implementation and enforcement of labor legislation remains weak.¹⁶⁴² The Labor Inspectorate within the Ministry of Labor has one inspector and several assistants in each prefecture to enforce relevant legislation; however, no cases of child labor were reported from January to August 2002.¹⁶⁴³ According to the Labor Code, punishment for infractions of child labor laws range from a fine of up to 800,000 GNF (USD 420) to imprisonment of no more than two months.¹⁶⁴⁴ The penalty for trafficking is 5 to 10 years of imprisonment.¹⁶⁴⁵

The Government of Guinea has not ratified ILO Convention 138 or ILO Convention 182.¹⁶⁴⁶

¹⁶³⁸ Section 187 of the Labor Code prohibits hazardous work, defined as any work likely to endanger the health, safety, or morals of children. The Ministry of Labor determines the exact jobs that are considered hazardous. See *Code du Travail, 1988*, Articles 2, 186 and 87, 205.

¹⁶³⁹ U.S. Embassy- Conakry, *unclassified telegram no. 2368*.

¹⁶⁴⁰ Government of the Republic of Guinea, *Penal Code*, Article 289, as cited in Protection Project [cited September 4, 2002]; available from <http://www.protectionproject.org>.

¹⁶⁴¹ U.S. Embassy- Conakry, *unclassified telegram no. 2704*. See also Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, "Guinea," in *Global Report 2001*, 2001, Articles 288 and 89 [cited September 4, 2002]; available from http://www.child-soldiers.org/report2001/global_report_contents.html.

¹⁶⁴² UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Initial Reports of States Parties: Guinea*, para. 119.

¹⁶⁴³ Bengaly Camara, Deputy Inspector of Labor, Inspecteur-Generale du Travail, interview with USDOL official, August 12, 2002.

¹⁶⁴⁴ *Code du Travail, 1988*, Article 205. For currency conversion see FX Converter, at <http://www.carosta.de/frames/convert.htm>, [cited October 10, 2002].

¹⁶⁴⁵ U.S. Embassy- Conakry, *unclassified telegram no. 2368*.

¹⁶⁴⁶ ILO, *Ratifications by Country*, in ILOLEX, [database online] [cited September 4, 2002]; available from <http://iloex.ilo.ch:1567/english/newratframeE.htm>.