

Russia

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

The Government of Russia is an associated member of ILO-IPEC.³⁰⁰⁷ In January 2000, the government began working with ILO-IPEC on a three-year project to rehabilitate working street children in St. Petersburg.³⁰⁰⁸ ILO-IPEC officials conducted awareness raising workshops for local government officials, organized an action committee that developed recommendations for city government action,³⁰⁰⁹ established teacher training in schools with high dropout rates, and directed families with at-risk children to existing services.³⁰¹⁰ In 2001, Russia's Ministry of Labor worked with ILO-IPEC to conduct studies on the situation of street children in Moscow and the Leningrad Oblast region.³⁰¹¹ In 2002, President Vladimir Putin called for immediate measures to address the problem of working street children, and the Ministry of Labor established a hotline for reporting cases of child abuse, including the problem of street children.³⁰¹² Also in 2002, the Governor of St. Petersburg, a trade union federation and employers signed an agreement aimed at eliminating the worst forms of child labor.³⁰¹³ The government has developed a National Plan of Action on children's rights,³⁰¹⁴ and has a federal commission headed by the Minister of Labor that focuses on child labor and education issues.³⁰¹⁵

The government is strengthening the education system to ensure that children have access to high quality education.³⁰¹⁶ Its education strategy is contained in the Education Law and the Federal Program for Education Development, which emphasize curricular diversity, management

³⁰⁰⁶ ILO, *Ratifications by Country*, in ILOLEX, [database online], [cited September 5, 2002]; available from <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/newratframeE.htm>.

³⁰⁰⁷ ILO-IPEC, *IPEC Action Against Child Labour: Highlights 2002*, Geneva, 2002, 16.

³⁰⁰⁸ U.S. Consulate- St. Petersburg, *unclassified telegram no. 1504*, July 17, 2002.

³⁰⁰⁹ The action committee consists of trade union, police, academic, employer and NGO representatives. See *Ibid.*

³⁰¹⁰ The project also provides rehabilitation for young girls living on the street and food, health care, shelter, and other necessities to street children. U.S. Embassy- Moscow, *unclassified telegram no. 15215*, October 2002.

³⁰¹¹ *Ibid.*

³⁰¹² *Ibid.*

³⁰¹³ *Ibid.*

³⁰¹⁴ Valentina Matvienko, Deputy Prime Minister, Statement at the United Nations Special Session on Children, May 10, 2002, [cited September 18, 2002]; available from <http://www.un.org/ga/children/russiaE.htm>. See also U.S. Embassy- Moscow, *unclassified telegram no. 15215*.

³⁰¹⁵ In addition to government efforts to assist children at risk of working or living on the street, USAID is working with international and NGOs on an "Assistance to Russian Orphans" project that seeks to prevent child abandonment, promote policy change and increase public awareness on the problems of orphans. U.S. Embassy- Moscow, *unclassified telegram no. 15215*.

³⁰¹⁶ World Bank, *Education Innovation Project*, staff appraisal report, Washington, D.C., May 6, 1997, 6, [cited September 18, 2002]; available from <http://www4.worldbank.org/sprojects/Project.asp?pid=P008825>.

decentralization, diversification of education financing, and the development of monitoring mechanisms.³⁰¹⁷ In 2001, the government received World Bank financing for an Education Reform Project to improve general and vocational education and to enhance public educational spending.³⁰¹⁸ A World Bank project that started in 1997 is addressing social science education and textbook availability.³⁰¹⁹

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

Recent statistics on the number of working children under the age of 15 in Russia are unavailable. The breakup of the Soviet Union and the transition to a market economy increased poverty levels in Russia, and in 2002, the World Bank found that children have a higher poverty rate than the population as a whole.³⁰²⁰ There are reports that economic downturn and an increase in the divorce rate in Russia have led to an increase in the number of street children in the country.³⁰²¹ Estimates of the number of street children range from 100,000 to 150,000, with possibly 3 million additional children at risk of living on the streets.³⁰²² A 2001 ILO-IPEC survey estimated there were between 30,000 and 50,000 street children in Moscow alone.³⁰²³ Children work in retail services, apprenticeships, as couriers, trash collectors, and deliverers.³⁰²⁴ Children also work washing cars, in garages, trading and selling at kiosks and markets, and loading and guarding goods.³⁰²⁵ Children in Russia are engaged in prostitution and are trafficked for sexual exploitation from Russia to various European countries, the Middle East and North America.³⁰²⁶ Street children are

³⁰¹⁷ Ibid., 6.

³⁰¹⁸ World Bank, *Education Reform Project*, project appraisal document, Washington, D.C., April 30, 2001, 4, [cited September 18, 2002]; available from <http://www4.worldbank.org/sprojects/Project.asp?pid=P050474>.

³⁰¹⁹ World Bank, *Education Innovation Project*, staff appraisal report, 7.

³⁰²⁰ World Bank, *Memorandum of the President of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the International Finance Corporation to the Executive Directors on a Country Assistance Strategy of the World Bank Group for the Russian Federation*, Report No: 24127-RU, Washington, D.C., May 14, 2002, 1 and 3, [cited September 19, 2002]; available from <http://www.worldbank.org/ru/eng/group/strategy3/>.

³⁰²¹ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2001: Russia*, Washington, D.C., March 4, 2002, 1745-52, Section 5 [cited December 20, 2002]; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/eur/8331.htm>. See also ILO, *Working Street Children in Moscow (Draft)*, Moscow, March 2002.

³⁰²² World Bank, *Memorandum of the President*, 4. See U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Russia*, 1745-52, Section 5, which estimates that 50,000 children a year run away from home. See also UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child: Russian Federation*, CRC/C/15/Add.110, United Nations, Geneva, November 1999, 3, [cited September 19, 2002]; available from [http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(Symbol\)/f60a0928c30f787980256811003b8d5d?Opendocument](http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/f60a0928c30f787980256811003b8d5d?Opendocument).

³⁰²³ ILO, *Working Street Children*, 17.

³⁰²⁴ Ibid., 29.

³⁰²⁵ "Little Slaves of A Big City," *St. Petersburg Express* (St. Petersburg), September 2, 2002. See Institute for Global Ethics, *As Russian Economy Crumbles, Children Join Ranks of Working Poor*, Ethics Newsline (citing BBC news report), 1999 [cited September 17, 2002]; available from <http://www.globalethics.org/newsline/news11.html>.

³⁰²⁶ See U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Russia*, 1752-60, Sections 6d and 6f. See also U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2002: Russia*, Washington, D.C., June 5, 2002, 88 [cited December 18, 2002]; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2002/10682.htm>.

involved in pornography.³⁰²⁷ There are also reports of children fighting alongside rebels in Dagestan and Chechnya.³⁰²⁸

Primary education is free until age 15, but the Law on Education allows a child to finish school at the age of 14 with parental and government approval.³⁰²⁹ Most families pay additional fees for books and school supplies.³⁰³⁰ There are no primary school enrollment or attendance rates available for Russia, but truancy is reportedly a growing problem.³⁰³¹

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The new Labor Code sets the minimum age for regular employment at 16 years, and regulates the working conditions of children under 18, including bans on overtime, hazardous work and night work.³⁰³² Children may work in apprenticeship and internship programs at age 14 and 15 with parental approval, as long as such programs do not threaten their health and welfare.³⁰³³ The Constitution prohibits forced labor.³⁰³⁴ Article 151 of the Criminal Code prohibits coercion of a minor to engage in prostitution and Article 135 of the Code prohibits acts of perversion against children under the age of 14; Article 135 has been used to prosecute child pornographers.³⁰³⁵ There are no laws against trafficking in persons.³⁰³⁶

The Ministries of Labor and the Interior are responsible for child labor enforcement but do not effectively enforce these laws due to a lack of resources³⁰³⁷ and the informal nature of most child

³⁰²⁷ Irina Sandul, "Russia's Trade in Child Pornography," *The Russia Journal*, February 1, 2002, [cited September 17, 2002]; available from <http://www.trj.ru/index.hem?obj=5472&sid=8112922301749522702010298>. According to Sandul, Russia's age of legal consent is 14, allowing a child pornography industry to be established using children aged 15-16. See "Duma Votes to Tighten Child Sex Laws," *The Russia Journal (citing Reuters)*, June 27, 2002, [cited September 17, 2002]; available from <http://www.trj.ru/index.htm?obj=8326&sid=8112922301749522702010298>.

³⁰²⁸ Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, "Russia Federation," in *Global Report 2001*, 2001, [cited September 18, 2002]; available from <http://library.amnesty.it/cs/childsolderis.nsf>. See also UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding Observations*, 3.

³⁰²⁹ Although no law exists to make education compulsory, the Constitution holds parents responsible for ensuring their children receive basic education. U.S. Embassy- Moscow, *unclassified telegram no. 15215*.

³⁰³⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁰³¹ *Ibid.*

³⁰³² U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Russia*, 1752-60, Section 6d. This labor code came into force on February 1, 2002. See U.S. Department of State official, electronic communication to USDOL official, November 29, 2002.

³⁰³³ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Russia*.

³⁰³⁴ *Constitution of the Russian Federation*, Article 37, [cited September 17, 2002]; available from <http://www.friends-partners.org/oldfriends/constitution/russian-constitution.html>.

³⁰³⁵ U.S. Embassy- Moscow, *unclassified telegram no. 15215*.

³⁰³⁶ Donna M. Hughes, *Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation: The Case of the Russian Federation*, June 2002, 24, [cited September 19, 2002]; available from <http://www.iom.int/documents/publication/en/mrs%5F7%5F2002.pdf>. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Russia*, 1752-60, Section 6f.

³⁰³⁷ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Russia*, 1752-60, Section 6d.

labor in Russia.³⁰³⁸ The Minister of Labor reported that 12,000 child labor violations were registered and 16,500 criminal cases opened in connection with child labor violations in 2001.³⁰³⁹ The government reported to the ILO that children were often engaged in harmful and hazardous work, and that 2,300 child labor inspections identified and addressed 8,000 violations in 1999.³⁰⁴⁰ Child labor inspections are complaint-driven.³⁰⁴¹

The Government of Russia ratified ILO Convention 138 on May 3, 1979, but has not ratified ILO Convention 182.³⁰⁴²

³⁰³⁸ U.S. Embassy- Moscow, *unclassified telegram no. 15215*.

³⁰³⁹ Oksana Yablokova, "50,000 Children in City Workforce," *The Moscow Times*, 2002, copyright 2002 by The Independent Press [cited September 17, 02]; available from <http://www.globalmarch.org/clns/daily-news/may-2002/may-17-2002-2.htm>.

³⁰⁴⁰ ILO, *Individual Observations of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations: Individual Observation Concerning Convention No. 138*, Geneva, 2001, [cited September 17, 2002]; available from <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/newcountryframeE.htm>.

³⁰⁴¹ U.S. Embassy- Moscow, *unclassified telegram no. 17925*, September 2000.

³⁰⁴² ILO, *Ratifications by Country*, in ILOLEX, [database online], [cited September 17, 2002]; available from <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/newratframeE.htm>.