

# 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 and the U.S. Government to improve the country's adherence to international labor standards, including those related to child labor.<sup>1575</sup> The country has government-sponsored and private programs to provide vocational education for at-risk children.<sup>1576</sup> 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, and will aim to ensure free education for all.<sup>1577</sup> The government provides assistance to child victims of trafficking and is constructing two shelters for trafficked children. In addition, the government helped sponsor a public awareness campaign aimed at reducing young girls' vulnerability to trafficking.<sup>1578</sup>

## Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

In 2001, the ILO estimated that 32 percent of children ages 10 to 14 years in Equatorial Guinea were working.<sup>1579</sup> Children work primarily on family farms, in street vending,<sup>1580</sup> in bars and grocery stores.<sup>1581</sup> There is evidence that children engage in prostitution,<sup>1582</sup> particularly in the capital city of Malabo.<sup>1583</sup> Children are trafficked within the country and from neighboring countries in West and Central Africa for commercial sexual exploitation and bonded labor as domestic servants, farmhands and street hawkers.<sup>1584</sup>

Education is compulsory through primary school, but the law is not enforced.<sup>1585</sup> In 2000, the gross primary enrollment rate was 120.4 percent, and the net primary enrollment rate was 71.7 percent.<sup>1586</sup> Attendance rates are not available for Equatorial Guinea.<sup>1587</sup> While enrollment rates indicate a level of commitment to education, they do not always reflect children's participation in school.<sup>1588</sup> Late entry into the school system and high dropout

<sup>1575</sup> U.S. Embassy–Yaounde, *unclassified telegram no. 3123*, July 2000.

<sup>1576</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1577</sup> Integrated Regional Information Networks, "Equatorial Guinea: Basic Education Plan Ratified", IRINnews.org, [online], September 26, 2002 [cited July 15, 2003]; available from <http://www.irinnews.org/print.asp?ReportID=30109>.

<sup>1578</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2003: Equatorial Guinea*, Washington, D.C., June 11, 2003; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2003/21275.htm>.

<sup>1579</sup> World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2003* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2003.

<sup>1580</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2002: Equatorial Guinea*, Washington, D.C., March 31, 2003, Section 6d; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2002/18181.htm>.

<sup>1581</sup> Integrated Regional Information Networks, *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>.

<sup>1582</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1583</sup> afrol.com, *Child Labour Increasing in Equatorial Guinea*, [online] November 21, 2000 [cited July 15, 2003]; available from [http://www.afrol.com/News/eqg023\\_child\\_labour.htm](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, 2000 [cited July 15, 2003]; available from [http://www.afrol.com/News/eqg013\\_prostitution.htm](http://www.afrol.com/News/eqg013_prostitution.htm).

<sup>1584</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report: Equatorial Guinea*.

<sup>1585</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Equatorial Guinea*, Section 5.

<sup>1586</sup> World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2003*. For an explanation of gross primary enrollment and/or attendance rates that are greater than 100 percent, please see the definitions of gross primary enrollment rate and gross primary attendance rate in the glossary of this report.

<sup>1587</sup> According to the representative of UNICEF in Equatorial Guinea in 2000, 50 percent of school-age children did not attend primary school. See afrol.com, *Child Labour Increasing*.

<sup>1588</sup> For a more detailed discussion on the relationship between education statistics and work, see the preface to this report.

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rates are common, and girls are more likely than boys to drop out of school.<sup>1589</sup> Pregnancy and the expectation that girls will assist with agricultural work result in lower education attainment levels for girls, with only 12 percent of girls reaching the secondary level compared with more than 24 percent of boys in 1999.<sup>1590</sup>

## Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

Labor laws set the minimum age for employment at 14 years, but the law is not enforced.<sup>1591</sup> Children as young as 13 years of age can work in light jobs on the condition that the work does not affect their health, growth, or school attendance. Children who are 12 years old may work in agriculture or craft making.<sup>1592</sup> Children under 16 years are prohibited from work that might harm their health, safety, or morals.<sup>1593</sup> In 2001, the government passed a measure banning all children under the age of 17 years from being on the streets and from working after 11 p.m. This measure was undertaken by the Ministry of the Interior to curb growing levels of prostitution, delinquency, and alcoholism among young people employed in bars, grocery stores, and as street hawkers. The measure calls for the arrest of violators and fining of parents as punishment for violations.<sup>1594</sup> Forced or bonded labor by children is prohibited.<sup>1595</sup> Although prostitution is illegal<sup>1596</sup>, the country does not have an anti-trafficking law but is in the process of drafting legislation.<sup>1597</sup>

The Ministry of Labor corps of 50 national labor inspectors enforces labor laws.<sup>1598</sup> However, the government devotes little attention to the rights of children, and fails to enforce minimum age laws for work or laws mandating education through primary school.<sup>1599</sup>

The Government of Equatorial Guinea ratified ILO Convention 138 on June 12, 1985 and ILO Convention 182 on August 13, 2001.<sup>1600</sup>

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<sup>1589</sup> 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; available from [http://www.unhcr.ch/Huridocda/Huridoca.nsf/0/0c79798828d22553c1256a15005b5ddf/\\$FILE/G0110211.pdf](http://www.unhcr.ch/Huridocda/Huridoca.nsf/0/0c79798828d22553c1256a15005b5ddf/$FILE/G0110211.pdf).

<sup>1590</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Equatorial Guinea*, Section 5.

<sup>1591</sup> *Ibid.*, Section 6d.

<sup>1592</sup> 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*.

<sup>1593</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1594</sup> Integrated Regional Information Networks, *Equatorial Guinea; Minors Grounded*.

<sup>1595</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Equatorial Guinea*, Section 6b.

<sup>1596</sup> Protection Project, *Human Rights Report on Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children: Equatorial Guinea*, 2002; available from <http://www.protectionproject.org/main1.htm>.

<sup>1597</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report: Equatorial Guinea*.

<sup>1598</sup> U.S. Embassy-Yaounde, *unclassified telegram no. 3123*.

<sup>1599</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Equatorial Guinea*, Sections 5 and 6d.

<sup>1600</sup> ILO, *Ratifications by Country*, in ILOLEX, [database online] [cited July 15, 2003]; available from <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/newratframeE.htm>.