

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

The Government of Sierra Leone, with support from the African Development Bank and the Islamic Development Bank, is constructing 600 new primary schools and 100 junior secondary schools, and furnishing them with textbooks, furniture and other needed equipment.<sup>3929</sup> The Voice of Children, a radio program run by children for children, was launched in February 2003 and is supported by the Government of Sierra Leone.<sup>3930</sup> The government has also established a National Commission for War-Affected Children whose goals are to provide support to demobilized child combatants, to develop and implement strategies to ensure that the needs of young girls are addressed, and to continue to provide services for children who are separated from their parents.<sup>3931</sup>

The government has created a National Education Action Plan emphasizing improvements in the quality and relevance of education, expanding access to primary education, especially for girls and the rural poor, and building the planning and management capacity of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.<sup>3932</sup> The World Bank is currently supporting a program to help Sierra Leone's schools meet basic standards in a post-conflict environment and to build up the capacity of the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology to deliver educational services.<sup>3933</sup> The Minister of Education, Science and Technology has stated that the national government will pay the fees for the National Primary School Exams and the Basic Education Certificate Education exams, and has pledged to reduce the cost of textbooks by 60 percent.<sup>3934</sup> UNICEF is engaged in projects to renovate schools, distribute teaching materials and equipment, retrain teachers, and promote girls' education.<sup>3935</sup>

## Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

In 2000, UNICEF estimated that 72 percent of children ages 5 to 14 years in Sierra Leone were working. The survey estimated that 2 percent of children between 5 and 14 perform paid work, while 48 percent of children in Sierra Leone perform unpaid work for someone other than a household member.<sup>3936</sup> The survey also found that

<sup>3929</sup> Big Ben, "Science and Technology Minister, Dr. Alpha Tejan Wurle- On the Subject of Literacy," *Sierra Leone Live*, July 25, 2002, [cited August 29, 2003]; available from <http://www.sierraleonelive.com/news/templates/education.asp?articleid=215&zoneid=15>. The portion of the initiative funded by the African Development Bank will support the rehabilitation, reconstruction or expansion of 460 primary schools, 100 junior secondary schools, and vocational training centers. This project includes funding from the International Development Association and the United Kingdom's Department for International Development. See The African Development Bank Group, *The African Development Fund Approves a US \$19.84 Million Loan and a US \$ 1.32 Million Grant to Finance the Rehabilitation of Basic, Non-Formal and Vocational Education (Education III Project) in Sierra Leone*, press release, October 16, 2002; available from [http://www.afdb.org/knowledge/pressreleases2001/adf\\_56\\_2002e.htm](http://www.afdb.org/knowledge/pressreleases2001/adf_56_2002e.htm).

<sup>3930</sup> UN, *UN Special Envoy for Children and Armed Conflict Arrives in Sierra Leone*, press release, HR/4646, New York, February 24, 2003; available from <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2003/hr4646.doc.htm>. See also U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2003: Sierra Leone*, Washington, D.C., June 11, 2003; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2003/21277.htm>.

<sup>3931</sup> Government of Sierra Leone, *Sierra Leone: Post-Conflict Development Agenda: Strategies for Growth and Poverty Reduction*, Paris, November 13-14, 2002, 28; available from <http://www.undpsalone.org/files/Programmes/SIL%20Medium%20Term%20Post-conflict%20Agenda.pdf>.

<sup>3932</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-27.

<sup>3933</sup> World Bank, *Rehabilitation of Basic Education Project*, Washington, D.C., August 29, 2003, [cited August 29, 2003]; available from <http://web.worldbank.org/external/projects/main?pagePK=104231&theSitePK=40941&menuPK=228424&Projectid=P074320>.

<sup>3934</sup> Big Ben, "Science and Technology Minister."

<sup>3935</sup> Integrated Regional Information Networks, "Sierra Leone: Army Recruits Trained in Child Protection", [online], November 3, 2000. See also UNICEF, *Girls' Education in Sierra Leone*, [online] [cited June 28, 2003].

<sup>3936</sup> 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. See Government of Sierra Leone, *The Status of Women and Children in Sierra Leone: A Household Survey Report (MICS-2)*, November 2000, 60; available from <http://www.childinfo.org/MICS2/newreports/sierraleone/sierraleone.PDF> and <http://www.childinfo.org/MICS2/newreports/sierraleone/sierraleonetables.pdf>. See Government of Sierra Leone, *The Status of Women and Children in Sierra Leone*, 14. In 2000, the ILO estimated that 13.9 percent of children between the ages of 10 and 14 were working in Sierra Leone. See World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2003* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2003.

10 percent of children spend more than 4 hours per day on domestic work, such as cooking, shopping, and cleaning.<sup>3937</sup> Children in Sierra Leone work in family businesses and as petty vendors, and seasonally on family subsistence farms.<sup>3938</sup> Street children are employed by adults to sell, steal and beg, and hundreds of children mine alluvial diamond fields.<sup>3939</sup> Teenage prostitution has reportedly become a significant problem as a result of migration from rural areas to Freetown and other urban areas during the war.<sup>3940</sup> Children were reportedly trafficked from Sierra Leone to Liberia as forced conscripts, and some are trafficked to Europe in false adoption schemes.<sup>3941</sup>

Human rights groups estimate that between 6,000 and 10,000 children under 16 years of age were forcibly abducted into military service during the civil war.<sup>3942</sup> Most child soldiers served the rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and other military groups, which forced children into their ranks and made them serve as soldiers, sex slaves, or diamond miners.<sup>3943</sup> Child soldiers forced into military service by the RUF were required to engage in combat, massacres, and other acts of brutality.<sup>3944</sup> In May 2001, following reconciliation talks between the Government of Sierra Leone and the RUF, the RUF began to release child soldiers.<sup>3945</sup> Between May 2001 and January 2002, 6,845 children from the RUF and Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), and from the government-allied Civil Defense Force (CDF) militias, were disarmed and demobilized.<sup>3946</sup> Eight percent of these children were girls.<sup>3947</sup> However, UNICEF has identified at least 400 girls who remain with their RUF captors.<sup>3948</sup> Also, the number of street children, particularly in urban areas, is rising,<sup>3949</sup> and there are reports that children continue to be forced to work in diamond mines by former RUF commanders.<sup>3950</sup>

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<sup>3937</sup> Other tasks include washing clothes, fetching water, and caring for children. See Government of Sierra Leone, *The Status of Women and Children in Sierra Leone*, 60. Work in the home for more than 4 hours a day is generally believed to interfere with a child's schooling, and thus to constitute child labor.

<sup>3938</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2002: Sierra Leone*, Washington, D.C., March 31, 2003, Section 6d; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2002/18225pf.htm>.

<sup>3939</sup> A majority of these children work for relatives, although some are reported to work for former Revolutionary United Front commanders. See *Ibid.*

<sup>3940</sup> Swedish International Development Agency, *Looking Back, Thinking Forward: The Fourth Report on the Implementation of the Agenda for Action Adopted at the First World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Stockholm, Sweden, 28 August 1996*, ECPAT International, 2000, [cited October 28, 2001]; available from <http://www.ecpat.net/Blueboo2000/index.html>.

<sup>3941</sup> Children were also trafficked internally throughout the decade-long civil war. See U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report: Sierra Leone*.

<sup>3942</sup> Douglas Farah, "Children Forced to Kill," *Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.), April 10, 2000; available from <http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/issues/sierra/childarm.htm>. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2001: Sierra Leone*, Washington, D.C., March 4, 2002, Section 6c; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/af/8402.htm>. See also U.S. Embassy- Freetown official, electronic communication to USDOL official, February 19, 2004.

<sup>3943</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Sierra Leone*, Section 6c. See also Douglas Farah, "Rebels in Sierra Leone Mine Diamonds in Defiance of UN: Captured Children and Conscripts Used as Laborers," *Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.), August 19, 2001, [cited August 29, 2003]; available from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn?pagename=article&node=&contentId=A30720-2001Aug18&notFound=true>.

<sup>3944</sup> Farah, "Children Forced to Kill."

<sup>3945</sup> UNICEF, *UNICEF Encouraged by the Release Today of 150 Child Soldiers in Sierra Leone*, press release, Freetown/New York, June 4, 2001; available from <http://www.unicef.org/newsline/01prjune4cs.htm>.

<sup>3946</sup> Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2003: Sierra Leone*, New York, 2003; available from <http://hrw.org/wr2k3/africa10.html>. See also Amnesty International, *Amnesty International Report 2003: Sierra Leone*, London, 2003; available from <http://web.amnesty.org/web/web.nsf/print/sle-summary-eng>.

<sup>3947</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Sierra Leone*, Section 5. See also Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2003: Sierra Leone*.

<sup>3948</sup> Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2003: Sierra Leone*.

<sup>3949</sup> Government of Sierra Leone, *Sierra Leone: Post-Conflict Development Agenda*, 28. More than 5,000 street and unaccompanied children are estimated to be in Freetown and other urban centers. See ECPAT International, *Sierra Leone*, in ECPAT International, [database online] [cited June 18, 2003]; available from <http://www.ecpat.net/>.

<sup>3950</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Sierra Leone*, Section 6c.

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The law mandates primary school attendance.<sup>3951</sup> In 2000, the gross primary enrollment rate was 92.8 percent (106.0 percent for boys and 79.8 percent for girls).<sup>3952</sup> That same year, however, the net primary school attendance rate was 40.7 percent.<sup>3953</sup> The lack of schools has made implementation of compulsory education impossible.<sup>3954</sup> Even before the war, the educational system was capable of serving only 45 percent of primary school-age children.<sup>3955</sup> As a result of the civil war, 1,270 primary schools were reported to have been destroyed, and in 2001, UNICEF estimated that 67 percent of all school age children were out of school.<sup>3956</sup> The Government of Sierra Leone has since introduced “free” primary education.<sup>3957</sup> However, there are widespread complaints among Sierra Leoneans that due to associated costs of schooling, including books, uniforms, supplies, and unofficial teacher’s fees, education is not free.<sup>3958</sup>

## Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The minimum age for employment in Sierra Leone is 18 years, although children between the ages of 12 and 18 years may be employed in some non-hazardous occupations with the consent of their parents.<sup>3959</sup> However, the government lacks resources to enforce these laws.<sup>3960</sup> Forced and bonded labor, including by children, is prohibited by the Constitution.<sup>3961</sup> There is no law that specifically prohibits trafficking in persons, but there are laws against procuring a female by threats or coercion for the purpose of prostitution.<sup>3962</sup> The government provides assistance to a special UN court in the trials of the leader of the pro-Government militia, later an Interior Minister, and former rebel commanders for kidnapping and recruiting child soldiers in March 2002.<sup>3963</sup>

The Government of Sierra Leone has not ratified ILO Convention 138 or ILO Convention 182.<sup>3964</sup>

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<sup>3951</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3952</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>3953</sup> Approximately 43.1 percent of primary school age boys were attending primary school in 2000, while the net primary school attendance rate for girls was only 38.1 percent. See Government of Sierra Leone, *The Status of Women and Children in Sierra Leone*, Table 11.

<sup>3954</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Sierra Leone*, Section 5.

<sup>3955</sup> UNICEF, *Girls’ Education in Sierra Leone*.

<sup>3956</sup> Republic of Sierra Leone, *Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper*, Freetown, June 2001, 18–19 [cited August 29, 2003]; available from <http://www.imf.org/external/np/prsp/2001/sle/01/063101.pdf>.

<sup>3957</sup> President and Commander-in-Chief of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces His Excellency Alhaji Dr. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, Inaugural Address On the Occasion of the State Opening of the First Session of the First Parliament of the Third Republic, July 12, 2002, [cited August 29, 2003]; available from <http://www.sierra-leone.org/kabbah071202.html>. See also Government of Sierra Leone, Letter of Intent and Memorandum of Economic and Financial Policies to the International Monetary Fund, August 12, 2002.

<sup>3958</sup> U.S. Embassy- Freetown official, electronic communication, February 19, 2004.

<sup>3959</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Sierra Leone*, Section 6d.

<sup>3960</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3961</sup> Ibid., Section 6c.

<sup>3962</sup> Ibid., Section 6f. See also U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report: Sierra Leone*.

<sup>3963</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report: Sierra Leone*. See also U.S. Embassy- Freetown official, electronic communication, February 19, 2004.

<sup>3964</sup> ILO, *Ratifications by Country*, in ILOLEX, [online database] [cited June 28, 2003]; available from <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/newratframeE.htm>.