

São Tomé and Príncipe

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

UNICEF estimated that 19.8 percent of children ages 5 to 14 years in São Tomé and Príncipe were working in 2000.³⁵²⁷ Almost 5 percent of the working children within this age group perform domestic work for 4 or more hours per day,³⁵²⁸ which may include such tasks as cooking, collecting water, and watching younger siblings.³⁵²⁹ About 10 percent of children ages 5 to 14 work for their families in the streets, on commercial farms, or in other activities in the informal sector.³⁵³⁰ From an early age, children reportedly work in subsistence agriculture, on plantations, and in informal commerce.³⁵³¹ Children also work in auto mechanic shops, cabinetry, and tailoring.³⁵³² There is little information about the commercial sexual exploitation of children in the country, but the government anticipates that, with the increase in tourism, the establishment of tax-free zones, oil exploration, and increased migration to São Tomé, children are at risk of such exploitation.³⁵³³

Education is free, universal, and compulsory through the sixth grade.³⁵³⁴ Although education is compulsory through the sixth grade, many children work in the absence of educational opportunities beyond the fourth grade.³⁵³⁵ Buying books and uniforms is the responsibility of the family, but the government provides assistance to those who cannot afford them.³⁵³⁶ In 2001, the gross primary enrollment

³⁵²⁷ 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 São Tomé and Príncipe, *Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2000 - São Tomé and Príncipe*, UNICEF, 2000, 64; available from <http://www.childinfo.org/MICS2/newreports/saotome/STPtables.pdf>.

³⁵²⁸ Ibid.

³⁵²⁹ Government of São Tomé and Príncipe, *Enquête de grappes à indicateurs multiples MICS: Rapport d'analyse*, UNICEF, July 14, 2000, 9; available from <http://www.childinfo.org/MICS2/newreports/saotome/SaoTome&Principe.PDF>.

³⁵³⁰ Ibid. The largest percentage of child workers from this group is found in Príncipe (18 percent) and in the north (15 percent).

³⁵³¹ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2003: São Tomé and Príncipe*, Washington, D.C., February 25, 2004, Section 6d; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2003/27746.htm>. Child labor is seen to be increasing particularly in the urban centers. See UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Initial Reports of States Parties Due in 1993*, CRC/C/8/Add.49, prepared by Government of São Tomé and Príncipe, pursuant to Article 44 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, March 4, 2003, para. 430.

³⁵³² Ambrósio Quaresma, *Unicef quer conhecer a realidade de mão de obra infantil em S. Tomé e Príncipe*, UNICEF, [online] [cited May 24, 2004]; available from <http://www.unicef.org/saotome/trabalho.htm>.

³⁵³³ ECPAT International, *São Tomé and Príncipe*, in ECPAT International, [database online] 2002 [cited May 24, 2004]; available from http://www.ecpat.net/eng/Ecpat_inter/projects/monitoring/online_database/index.asp.

³⁵³⁴ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: São Tomé and Príncipe*, Section 5.

³⁵³⁵ UNICEF, *Education Programme*, [online] 2000 [cited May 24, 2004]; available from <http://www.unicef.org/saotome/educatio.htm>.

³⁵³⁶ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: São Tomé and Príncipe*.

rate was 126.5 percent.³⁵³⁷ Gross enrollment ratios are based on the number of students formally registered in primary school and therefore do not necessarily reflect actual school attendance. Primary school attendance statistics are not available for São Tomé and Príncipe.

Class time is insufficient because of a triple-shift system, which designates shifts of 4 hours. In reality, students attend between 2 and 3 hours of class time per day.³⁵³⁸ The educational system suffers from poorly-trained and underpaid teachers, a shortage of classrooms, inadequate textbooks and materials, high rates of repetition, poor educational planning and management, and a lack of community involvement in school management.³⁵³⁹ Only about 78 percent of children who enter first grade reach fourth grade and 52 percent reach eighth grade.³⁵⁴⁰ Coordination among government ministries on education issues is poor,³⁵⁴¹ and a lack of domestic funding for the school system leaves the system highly dependent on foreign assistance.³⁵⁴²

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The minimum age for employment of a child is 16 years as established by national legislation.³⁵⁴³ The law applies to commercial agriculture and export processing zones but not to family-owned or -operated farms and enterprises, domestic services, or light work.³⁵⁴⁴ It is illegal for children under 18 years to work at night, more than 7 hours per day, or more than 35 hours per week.³⁵⁴⁵ The Penal Code prohibits the commercial

³⁵³⁷ World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2004* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2004. 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.

³⁵³⁸ World Bank, *Project Appraisal Document on a Proposed Grant in the Amount of SDR 1.1 Million (US\$ 1.5 Million Equivalent) to the Democratic Republic of São Tomé and Príncipe for a Social Sector Support Project*, no. 28319-STP, Washington, D.C., April 22, 2004 2004, 2; available from http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2004/04/29/000160016_20040429122636/Rendered/INDEX/28319.txt. Only about 35 percent of primary school teachers are trained educators.

³⁵³⁹ United Nations House, *São Tomé and Príncipe: Common Country Assessment*, [cited May 24, 2004]; available from <http://www.uns.st/uns/Summary.html>.

³⁵⁴⁰ World Bank, *São Tomé and Príncipe- Social Sector Support*.

³⁵⁴¹ UNESCO, *L'évaluation de l'éducation pour tous a l'an 2000: Rapport de pays: São Tomé and Príncipe*, prepared by Ministry of Education and Culture, pursuant to UN General Assembly Resolution 52/84, 2000; available from http://www2.unesco.org/wef/countryreports/saotome_principe/contents.html.

³⁵⁴² United Nations House, *São Tomé e Príncipe: Common Country Assessment*.

³⁵⁴³ ILO, *Review of Annual Reports under the Follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work*, Geneva, March 2002, Part II. The U.S. Department of State reports that the minimum age for employment was 18 in the formal sector. See U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: São Tomé and Príncipe*, Section 6d. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, the legal age of employment of children is 14. See Ministère des Affaires Étrangères et de la Coopération, *Rapport Initial sur l'Application de la Convention sur les Droits de l'Enfant*, July, 2001, 16.

³⁵⁴⁴ ILO, *Review of Annual Reports*, Part II.

³⁵⁴⁵ Ministère des Affaires Étrangères et de la Coopération, *Rapport Initial sur l'Application de la Convention sur les Droits de l'Enfant*, 16, 48.

sexual exploitation of children. There have been few prosecutions.³⁵⁴⁶ Forced and bonded labor, including by children, is prohibited and not known to exist.³⁵⁴⁷

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

The Government of São Tomé supports a number of non-formal education initiatives through various ministries.³⁵⁴⁸

WFP assists the government by supplying meals to primary school students.³⁵⁴⁹ UNICEF's school garden program provides an alternative learning environment for the students, as well as vegetables to supplement the food supplied by the WFP.³⁵⁵⁰

Selected Child Labor Measures Adopted by Governments	
Ratified Convention 138	
Ratified Convention 182	
ILO-IPEC Member	
National Plan for Children	
National Child Labor Action Plan	
Sector Action Plan	

³⁵⁴⁶ ECPAT International, *São Tomé and Príncipe*. While there have been few cases involving child exploitation, it has been noted that the exploitation of children for financial gain is believed to be on the rise. See UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Initial Reports of State Parties: Sao Tome and Principe*, para. 405.

³⁵⁴⁷ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: São Tomé and Príncipe*, Section 6c.

³⁵⁴⁸ The Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Fishing and Rural Development, Ministry of Labor and Solidarity, and Ministry of Youth and Sports all support non-formal education programs. UNESCO, *Education Pour Tous-EPT: Plan Nacional d'Action 2002-2015*, November 18, 2002, 15; available from http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/file_download.php/7e1173d3d3e6b9fdc9ce582c6fa1e723PNA_EPT_SaoTomeetPrincipe.doc.

³⁵⁴⁹ WFP, *World Hunger - Sao Tome and Principe*, 2004 [cited May 24, 2004]; available from http://www.wfp.org/country_brief/indexcountry.asp?country=678.

³⁵⁵⁰ UNICEF, *At a glance: Sao Tome and Principe*, [online] 2004 [cited May 24, 2004]; available from <http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/stp.html>.