

Djibouti

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

Statistics on the number of working children under the age of 15 in Djibouti are unavailable.¹²⁷⁴ Although information is limited, reports indicate that children work in Djibouti.¹²⁷⁵ In rural areas, children perform unpaid labor on family farms. In urban areas, children often work in the informal sector in small-scale family businesses, trade, catering, crafts, or as domestic servants.¹²⁷⁶ Children displaced from Ethiopia and Somalia also seek work in the informal sector in Djibouti's cities, working as shoe polishers, car washers, *khat*¹²⁷⁷ sellers, street peddlers, money changers, beggars, and in commercial sexual exploitation.¹²⁷⁸ Commercial sexual exploitation of children is reportedly increasing, particularly among refugee street children in the capital city. A report by the Ministry of Youth and UNICEF found numerous girls between the ages of 8 and 17 years, many from Ethiopia, leaving work as domestic servants to become involved in commercial sex exploitation.¹²⁷⁹

Education is free and compulsory for children between the ages of 6 and 16 years.¹²⁸⁰ Although education is free, the additional expenses of transportation, uniforms, and books often prevent poor families from sending their children to school.¹²⁸¹ In 2001, the gross primary enrollment rate was 40.3 percent, and the net primary enrollment rate was 34.0 percent.¹²⁸² Both gross and net enrollment rates are lower for girls than for

¹²⁷⁴ LABORSTAT, *Djibouti: 1A-Total and economically active population by age group (Thousands)*, Geneva, [database online] 2004 [cited September 29, 2004]; available from <http://laborsta.ilo.org>. See also U.S. Embassy- Djibouti, *unclassified telegram no. 1124*, August 24, 2004.

¹²⁷⁵ U.S. Embassy- Djibouti, *unclassified telegram no. 1072*, October 2002. See also UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Initial Reports of States Parties due in 1993*, CRC/C/8/Add.39, prepared by Government of Djibouti, pursuant to Article 44 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, February 1998, paras. 144-45; available from http://66.36.242.93/reports/djibouti_crc_c_8_add.39_1998.php.

¹²⁷⁶ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Initial Reports of States Parties*, paras. 144-45.

¹²⁷⁷ "Khat" is a leaf that is chewed and its effect is as a stimulant. See Peter Kalix, *Khat (Qat, Kat): Chewing Khat*, World Health Organization, 1986; available from <http://www.a1b2c3.com/drugs/khat2.htm>. [cited September 29, 2004]

¹²⁷⁸ ILO, *Review of Annual Reports Under the Follow-Up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, The Effective Abolition of Child Labour: Djibouti*, GB.277/3/2, Geneva, March 2000, 270. See also U.S. Embassy- Djibouti, *unclassified telegram no. 1124*.

¹²⁷⁹ ECPAT International, *Djibouti*, in ECPAT International, [database online] [cited May 14, 2004]; available from http://www.ecpat.net/eng/Ecpat_inter/projects/monitoring/online_database/. See also UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties Under Article 44 of the Convention: Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child: Djibouti*, CRC/C/15/Add.131, United Nations, Geneva, June 2000, para. 57; available from [http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(Symbol\)/9af640001bbfa27180256900003612b6?Opendocument](http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/9af640001bbfa27180256900003612b6?Opendocument). See also U.S. Embassy- Djibouti, *unclassified telegram no. 1443*, December 2002.

¹²⁸⁰ U.S. Embassy- Djibouti, *unclassified telegram no. 1124*. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2003: Djibouti*, Washington D.C., March 11, 2004, Section 5; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2003/27724.htm>.

¹²⁸¹ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Djibouti*, Section 5.

¹²⁸² World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2004* [CD-ROM], Washington D.C., 2004.

boys.¹²⁸³ Gross and net enrollment ratios are based on the number of students formally registered in primary school and therefore do not necessarily reflect actual school attendance. Recent primary school attendance statistics are not available for Djibouti. According to reports, primary school attendance is particularly low in rural areas.¹²⁸⁴ According to one estimate, approximately 65,000 school-aged children are currently not attending school in the country.¹²⁸⁵ As of 1998, 76.7 percent of children who started primary school were likely to reach grade 5.¹²⁸⁶

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Labor Code sets the minimum age for employment at 14 years.¹²⁸⁷ Night work is prohibited for children under the age of 16, and the hours and conditions of work for children are regulated.¹²⁸⁸ Forced and bonded labor of children is also prohibited.¹²⁸⁹ Djiboutian law prohibits prostitution.¹²⁹⁰ The Penal Code provides protection for children against many of the worst forms of child labor, such as the use of children for prostitution, pornography, and trafficking of drugs.¹²⁹¹ The authority to enforce child labor laws and regulation rests with the Police Vice Squad “Brigade Des Moeurs” and the local Gendarmerie. The Labor Inspection Office has the authority to sanction businesses that employ children.¹²⁹² However, according to the U.S. Department of State, the government has a shortage of labor inspectors and limited financial resources with which to enforce labor laws.¹²⁹³

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

The Government of Djibouti is taking steps to increase awareness about the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which includes provisions on child labor. It has broadcast radio and television programs on the rights of the child and the advancement and protection of girls in four languages (Afar, Somali, Arabic,

¹²⁸³ In 2001, the gross primary enrollment rate was 34.8 percent for girls and 45.7 percent for boys. The net primary enrollment rate was 29.6 percent for girls and 38.3 percent for boys. See *Ibid.*

¹²⁸⁴ UN Integrated Regional Information Networks, *Djibouti: Special report on girls' education*, [online] [cited January 27, 2004]; available from http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=39139&SelectRegion=Horn_of_Africa&SelectCountry=DJIBOUTI.

¹²⁸⁵ U.S. Embassy- Djibouti, *unclassified telegram no. 1124*.

¹²⁸⁶ World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2004*.

¹²⁸⁷ See ILO, *The Effective Abolition of Child Labour: Djibouti*, 269. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Djibouti*, Section 6d. See also U.S. Embassy- Djibouti, *unclassified telegram no. 1124*.

¹²⁸⁸ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Initial Reports of States Parties*, paras. 24, 25.

¹²⁸⁹ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Djibouti*, Section 6c.

¹²⁹⁰ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Initial Reports of States Parties*, para.148. See also ECPAT International, *Djibouti*.

¹²⁹¹ U.S. Embassy- Djibouti, *unclassified telegram no. 1124*.

¹²⁹² The Office of the Labor Inspector currently has one inspector, who is responsible for supervising ten controllers. *Ibid.*

¹²⁹³ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Djibouti*. See also U.S. Embassy- Djibouti, *unclassified telegram no. 1072*.

and French).¹²⁹⁴ The government has also created a National Policy for Youth that focuses on children not in school. Under this policy, the government is encouraging community involvement and the use of Community Development Centers that host activities for out-of school children and serve as reading rooms for children in school.¹²⁹⁵ Every November 20th, on the Djiboutian Day of the Child, children's rights are discussed in schools and in the media, by NGOs, and children participate in shows and debates.¹²⁹⁶

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	

The World Bank supports several projects in Djibouti. The School Access and Improvement Project is funding the rehabilitation of classrooms for primary and middle schools, upgrading training materials, providing training, and improving government capacity to manage education reform.¹²⁹⁷ The Social Development and Public Works Project aims to enhance living standards in Djibouti by construction/rehabilitation of social infrastructures such as health posts and schools.¹²⁹⁸

¹²⁹⁴ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Summary Record of the 637th Meeting: Djibouti*, CRC/C/SR.637, United Nations, Geneva, January 8, 2001; available from [http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(Symbol\)/63755405aec3c40bc12569d60047821b?Opendocument](http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/63755405aec3c40bc12569d60047821b?Opendocument).

¹²⁹⁵ U.S. Embassy- Djibouti, *unclassified telegram no. 1124*.

¹²⁹⁶ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Summary Record of the 637th Meeting: Djibouti*, para.22.

¹²⁹⁷ The project runs through June 2005. See World Bank, *School Access and Improvement Project*, [online] [cited March 11, 2004]; available from <http://web.worldbank.org/external/projects/main?pagePK=104231&piPK=73230&theSitePK=40941&menuPK=228424&Projectid=P044585>.

¹²⁹⁸ The project runs through June 2006. See World Bank, *Social Development and Public Works Project*, in Projects Database, [database online] May 20, 2004 [cited May 20, 2004]; available from <http://web.worldbank.org/external/projects/main?pagePK=104231&piPK=73230&theSitePK=40941&menuPK=228424&Projectid=P044584>.