

Cameroon

| <i>Selected Statistics and Indicators on Child Labor</i> | |
|---|--------------------------|
| Percent of children 10-14 estimated as working in 2001: | 15.9% ⁸¹⁸ |
| Minimum age for admission to work: | 14 ⁸¹⁹ |
| Age to which education is compulsory: | 14 ⁸²⁰ |
| Free public education: | Yes ^{821*} |
| Gross primary enrollment rate in 2004: | 117% ⁸²² |
| Net primary enrollment rate: | Unavailable |
| Percent of children 10-14 attending school in 2001: | 84.6% ⁸²³ |
| As of 2002, percent of primary school entrants likely to reach grade 5: | 64% ⁸²⁴ |
| Ratified Convention 138: | 8/13/2001 ⁸²⁵ |
| Ratified Convention 182: | 6/5/2002 ⁸²⁶ |
| ILO-IPEC participating country: | Yes ⁸²⁷ |
| *Must pay for school supplies and related items. | |

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

In 2001, approximately 14.5 percent of boys and 17.4 percent of girls ages 10 to 14 were working in Cameroon. The majority of working children were found in the agricultural sector (88.2 percent), followed by services (7.1 percent), manufacturing (2.1 percent), and other sectors (2.6 percent).⁸²⁸ Some children work on cocoa farms as well as on banana and rubber plantations.⁸²⁹ Children also work as load bearers, traders, street vendors, car washers, and domestic servants.⁸³⁰ Children are also found working in fisheries, livestock raising, and

⁸¹⁸ UCW analysis of ILO SIMPOC, UNICEF MICS, and World Bank surveys, *Child Economic Activity and School Attendance Rates*, March 1, 2007.

⁸¹⁹ Government of Cameroon, *Labour Code*, Law no. 92/007, (August 14, 1992), Article 86(1); available from <http://natlex.ilo.org/txt/E92CMR01.htm>.

⁸²⁰ U.S. Department of State, "Cameroon," in *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2006*, Washington, DC, March 6, 2007, Section 5; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78723.htm>.

⁸²¹ Ibid. See also UNICEF, *Girls' Education in Cameroon*, [online] [cited January 21, 2007]; available from www.unicef.org/girlseducation/index.html.

⁸²² UNESCO Institute for Statistics, *Gross Enrolment Ratio. Primary. Total*, accessed December 20, 2006; available from <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/>.

⁸²³ UCW analysis of ILO SIMPOC, UNICEF MICS, and World Bank surveys, *Child Economic Activity and School Attendance Rates*.

⁸²⁴ UNESCO Institute for Statistics, *Survival Rate to Grade 5. Total*, accessed December 18, 2006; available from <http://stats.uis.unesco.org>.

⁸²⁵ ILO, *Ratifications by Country*, accessed March 26, 2004; available from <http://webfusion.ilo.org/public/db/standards/normes/appl/index.cfm?lang=EN>.

⁸²⁶ Ibid.

⁸²⁷ ILO-IPEC, *IPEC Action Against Child Labour; Highlights 2006*, Geneva, October 2006; available from http://www.ilo.org/iloroot/docstore/ipcc/prod/eng/20061019_Implementationreport_eng_Web.pdf.

⁸²⁸ UCW analysis of ILO SIMPOC, UNICEF MICS, and World Bank surveys, *Child Economic Activity and School Attendance Rates*.

⁸²⁹ U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2006: Cameroon," Section 6d. See also U.S. Embassy-Yaounde, *reporting*, March 2, 2006.

⁸³⁰ U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2006: Cameroon," Sections 6d and 6c. See also Marie Therese Mengue, *Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Cameroon*, July 2006; available from http://www.ecpat.net/eng/pdf/Cameroon/Cameroon_CSEC_Report%20_Eng.pdf. See also UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Initial Reports of States Parties Due in 1995*, Geneva, March 26, 2001, para. 275.

mining.⁸³¹ According to the Ministry of Social Affairs, children from large rural families are “loaned” for labor in exchange for monetary compensation in urban areas where they serve as domestics and street vendors, and sometimes as prostitutes.⁸³²

Cameroon is a source, transit, and destination country for trafficking of children for the purposes of forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation. While most of the trafficking occurs domestically,⁸³³ Cameroonian children are trafficked to Nigeria, Gabon, and the Central African Republic. Children are also trafficked to Cameroon from Nigeria, Chad, Gabon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, Benin, and Niger. Cameroon also serves as a country of transit for children trafficked between other countries such as Nigeria, Benin, Niger, Chad, Togo, the Republic of the Congo, and the Central African Republic. Girls are trafficked from Anglophone areas in Cameroon to the Francophone cities of Yaoundé and Douala to work as domestic servants, street vendors, prostitutes, as well as in child care; the children’s unfamiliarity with the language makes it easier for employers to assert their control.⁸³⁴ Girls are trafficked into Europe and Equatorial Guinea, for sexual exploitation.⁸³⁵ Trafficked children also work on cocoa, tea, banana, and rubber plantations; in spare-parts shops; and in bars and restaurants.⁸³⁶

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The law sets the minimum age for employment at 14 years, including for apprenticeships.⁸³⁷ Children are prohibited from working at night,⁸³⁸ and children under 18 are prohibited from moving heavy weights, performing dangerous and unhealthy tasks, and working in confined areas.⁸³⁹ The law also specifies that children cannot work in any job that exceeds their physical capacity, and the Labor Inspector can require child laborers to take a medical exam to determine if such a situation exists.⁸⁴⁰ The law also restricts the tasks that children may perform on ships and requires medical certificates in certain cases to verify their capacity for the type of work.⁸⁴¹ Violations of child labor provisions are punishable by fines.⁸⁴²

⁸³¹ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Reports submitted by states parties under article 44 of the convention*, para. 275.

⁸³² U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2006: Cameroon," Section 6c. See also U. S. Embassy- Yaounde, *reporting*, December 13, 2006.

⁸³³ U.S. Department of State, "Cameroon (Tier 2)," in *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2006*, Washington, DC, June 5, 2006; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2006/65988.htm>.

⁸³⁴ U.S. Embassy- Yaounde, *reporting*, March 2, 2005. See also U.S. Department of State, "Trafficking in Persons Report- 2006: Cameroon." See also U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2006: Cameroon," Section 5.

⁸³⁵ U.S. Department of State, "Trafficking in Persons Report- 2006: Cameroon."

⁸³⁶ U. S. Embassy- Yaounde, *reporting*, December 13, 2006. See also U.S. Department of State, "Trafficking in Persons Report- 2006: Cameroon." See also U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2006: Cameroon," Section 5.

⁸³⁷ Government of Cameroon, *Cameroon Labor Code*, Article 86(1).

⁸³⁸ *Ibid.*, Article 82(2).

⁸³⁹ U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2006: Cameroon," Section 6d.

⁸⁴⁰ Government of Cameroon, *Cameroon Labor Code*, Article 87(1).

⁸⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Article 86(2).

⁸⁴² *Ibid.*, Article 167.

The law prohibits slavery and servitude, and it guarantees the right to free choice of employment.⁸⁴³ The penalty for a person who subjects a child to debt bondage is 5 to 10 years in prison and a fine.⁸⁴⁴ Cameroon's anti-trafficking law defines child trafficking as the act of moving or helping to move a child within or outside Cameroon to reap financial or material benefit.⁸⁴⁵ Under the law, individuals who traffic or enslave a child are subject to the punishment of a prison sentence of 10 to 20 years and a fine; if the child is under 15 years or if the offender is the victim's parent, the punishment increases to 15 to 20 years of imprisonment.⁸⁴⁶ Cameroonian law also prohibits procuring prostitutes, including sharing the profits from another person's prostitution, and sets the penalty as a fine and imprisonment for 6 months to 5 years, which doubles if the crime involves a person less than 21 years.⁸⁴⁷ Military conscription is not compulsory in Cameroon. The minimum age for voluntary recruitment is 18, although enlistment under 18 is permitted with parental consent.⁸⁴⁸

The Ministries of Social Affairs, Labor, and Social Insurance enforce child labor laws through site inspections of registered businesses. The country has 58 labor inspectors who are responsible for investigating child labor cases.⁸⁴⁹ However, the U.S. Department of State reports that a lack of resources hindered the efforts to combat child labor.⁸⁵⁰ The Ministries of Labor, Social Insurance, and Social Affairs are also the lead government agencies responsible for anti-trafficking efforts.⁸⁵¹ In November 2006, police arrested 9 traffickers carrying 16 Nigerian children; Cameroonian authorities planned to repatriate the victims to the proper Nigerian authorities.⁸⁵²

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

Between 2002 and 2006, the Government of Cameroon participated in a USD 6 million ILO-IPEC regional project jointly funded by USDOL and the cocoa industry's Global Issues Group to combat exploitive child labor in the cocoa sector.⁸⁵³ The project closed in April 2006, and withdrew 8,756 children and prevented an additional 2,844 from exploitive work in the cocoa and other sub-agricultural sectors.⁸⁵⁴ With the support of USDOL, the Government of Cameroon is also taking part in a USD 9 million project implemented by ILO-IPEC to combat trafficking in

⁸⁴³ Government of Cameroon, *Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon*, Law no. 96-06, (January 18, 1996), Article 4. See also Government of Cameroon, *Cameroon Labor Code*, Article 2(3). See also U. S. Embassy- Yaounde, *reporting, December 13, 2006*.

⁸⁴⁴ Government of Cameroon, *Law relating to the Fight against Child Trafficking and Slavery*, Law No. 2005/015, (December 29, 2005), Article 3.

⁸⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, Article 2(b).

⁸⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Articles 4-5.

⁸⁴⁷ The Protection Project, "Cameroon," in *2005 Human Rights Report on Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children*, Washington, DC, 2005; available from <http://www.protectionproject.org>.

⁸⁴⁸ Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, "Cameroon," in *Child Soldiers Global Report 2004*, London, 2004; available from http://www.child-soldiers.org/document_get.php?id=966.

⁸⁴⁹ U. S. Embassy- Yaounde, *reporting, December 13, 2006*.

⁸⁵⁰ U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2006: Cameroon," Section 6d.

⁸⁵¹ *Ibid.*, Section 5. Also see U.S. Embassy- Yaounde, *E-mail communication to USDOL official*, August 1, 2007.

⁸⁵² U.S. Embassy- Yaounde, *reporting*, March 6, 2007.

⁸⁵³ U.S. Department of Labor International Child Labor Program, *West Africa Cocoa/Commercial Agriculture Program to Combat Hazardous and Exploitive Child Labor (WACAP)*, project summary, 2006.

⁸⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

children in West and Central Africa; the project aims at withdrawing and preventing 9,000 children from trafficking.⁸⁵⁵ USAID and the chocolate industry fund the Sustainable Tree Crops Program in Cameroon, a public-private partnership that promotes sustainable tree crop systems, including coffee, cocoa, and cashews, and contains a component to prevent and eliminate the worst forms of child labor on farms.⁸⁵⁶

The Government of Cameroon works with local and international NGOs to assist trafficking victims, including placing them in temporary shelters.⁸⁵⁷ UNICEF is using a multifaceted approach in Cameroon to combat the exploitation and trafficking of children: raising public awareness, promoting education as a preventative strategy against child labor, and establishing a legal framework and penalties.⁸⁵⁸ Both the government-owned and independent media have also engaged in awareness-raising activities, which included coverage of anti-trafficking press conferences, meetings, and events such as information week on the trafficking of African girls for sexual exploitation.⁸⁵⁹ The U.S. Department of State funded a USD 500,000 project in Cameroon to combat trafficking in children for exploitive labor until December 2006.⁸⁶⁰ The Government of Cameroon, along with ILO-IPEC, continued other awareness-raising activities to eliminate child trafficking in airports by distributing anti-trafficking embarkation and disembarkation cards.⁸⁶¹

⁸⁵⁵ ILO-IPEC, *Combating the Trafficking in Children for Labour Exploitation in West and Central Africa (LUTRENA) - Amendment*, project document amendment, Geneva, September 3, 2004, 6. See also U.S. Department of Labor International Child Labor Program, *Combating Trafficking in Children for Labor Exploitation in West and Central Africa, Phases 1 & 2 (LUTRENA)*, project summary, 2006.

⁸⁵⁶ USAID, "Chocolate Companies Help West African Farmers Improve Harvest," (September, 2005); available from http://www.usaid.gov/press/frontlines/fl_sep05/pillars.htm. See also International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, *Sustainable Tree Crops Program*, [online] [cited October 19, 2006]; available from <http://www.treecrops.org/index.htm>.

⁸⁵⁷ U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2006: Cameroon," Section 5.

⁸⁵⁸ UNICEF, *At a Glance: Cameroon*, [online] [cited June 6, 2006]; available from <http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/cameroon.html?q=printme>.

⁸⁵⁹ U.S. Embassy - Yaounde, *reporting*, March 6, 2007.

⁸⁶⁰ ILO-IPEC Geneva official, IPEC projects from all non-USDOL donors E-mail communication USDOL official, March 1, 2007.

⁸⁶¹ U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2006: Cameroon," Section 5.