

# Burundi

## Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

An estimated 31.2 percent of children ages 5 to 14 years were counted as working in Burundi in 2000. Approximately 32.3 percent of all boys 5 to 14 were working compared to 30.1 percent of girls in the same age group.<sup>800</sup> Children work in subsistence agriculture, the informal sector, domestic services, mining and brick-making industries, and family-based businesses.<sup>801</sup> The Ministry for the Promotion of Women and for Social Action estimated that there were approximately 5,000 street children in Burundi at the end of 2004.<sup>802</sup> Child labor is one of many problems associated with poverty. In 1998, the most recent year for which data are available, 54.6 percent of the population in Burundi were living on less than USD 1 a day.<sup>803</sup>

Reports indicate that underage soldiers continue to serve among the ranks of government and rebel armed forces. Reports indicate that rebel groups recruit children; the government stopped conscripting children in 2004. Some underage children reportedly join the government armed forces using falsified documents. These children engage in combat and work as spies, domestic workers,<sup>804</sup> and porters. Girls in some armed groups are forced to provide sexual services.<sup>805</sup> In May 2004, UNICEF estimated that approximately 3,000 child soldiers continued to serve in government or former rebel groups.<sup>806</sup> Burundi is a source and transit country for children trafficked for exploitation in forced soldiering. Street children, children from broken or displaced families, and children living in refugee camps are believed to be especially vulnerable to trafficking.<sup>807</sup> Child soldiers from Burundi also serve as soldiers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.<sup>808</sup>

---

<sup>800</sup> UCW analysis of ILO SIMPOC, UNICEF MICS, and World Bank Surveys, *Child Economic Activity and School Attendance Rates*, October 7, 2005. Reliable data on the worst forms of child labor are especially difficult to collect given the often hidden or illegal nature of the worst forms, such as the use of children in the illegal drug trade, prostitution, pornography, and trafficking. As a result, statistics and information on children's work in general are reported in this section. Such statistics and information may or may not include the worst forms of child labor. For more information on the definition of working children and other indicators used in this report, please see the "Data Sources and Definitions" section of this report.

<sup>801</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - 2004: Burundi*, Washington, DC, February 28, 2005, Section 6d; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2004/41591.htm>. See also J Wakana G Rwamaheke, T Barihuta, G Nkenguburundi, *Burundi's experience in the reduction of the HIV/AIDS impact on orphans*, online, National AIDS Council, Bujumbura, Burundi, July 12, 2004; available from [http://www.iasociety.org/print.asp?abstract\\_id=2171384](http://www.iasociety.org/print.asp?abstract_id=2171384).

<sup>802</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Burundi*, Section 5.

<sup>803</sup> World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2005* [CD-ROM], Washington, DC, 2005.

<sup>804</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Burundi*, Sections 5 and 6d.

<sup>805</sup> Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, *Child Soldiers Global Report 2004: Burundi*, November 17, 2004; available from [http://www.child-soldiers.org/document\\_get.php?id=761](http://www.child-soldiers.org/document_get.php?id=761).

<sup>806</sup> Estimates on the number of child soldiers vary by organization, and changed throughout the year, partly reflecting the results of demobilization efforts. The demobilization effort is coordinated by the Transitional Government's National Structure for the Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration, and Prevention of Child Soldiers. See U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Burundi*, Section 5. See also Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, *Child Soldiers Global Report 2004: Burundi*.

<sup>807</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Burundi*, Section 5. See also U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report*, Washington, DC, June 3, 2005; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2005/46613.htm>. See also ECPAT International CSEC Database, <http://www.ecpat.net> (Burundi; accessed June 20, 2005).

<sup>808</sup> Amnesty International, *Burundi: Child soldiers- the Challenge of Demobilisation*, March 2004; available from <http://web.amnesty.org/library/print/ENGAFR160112004>.

Primary education is now free in Burundi.<sup>809</sup> In August of 2005, the President of Burundi announced the government's decision to eliminate all fees for primary school.<sup>810</sup> Over 500,000 new children enrolled in primary school for the 2005-2006 school year, prompting the government to postpone the first day of classes for Grade 1 students in areas throughout Burundi, due to shortages of classroom space.<sup>811</sup> Schooling is compulsory until the age of 12, but this requirement is not enforced.<sup>812</sup> In 2002, the gross primary enrollment rate was 77 percent, and the net primary enrollment rate was 57 percent.<sup>813</sup> 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. In 2000, 41.9 percent of children ages 5 to 14 years were attending school.<sup>814</sup> As of 2001, 68 percent of children who started primary school were likely to reach grade 5.<sup>815</sup> Enrollment and attendance have been adversely affected by the military conflict. In some areas, schools have been destroyed, populations displaced, teachers killed, and students traumatized. Finding qualified teachers to work in some parts of the country continues to be a challenge.<sup>816</sup> The conflict and the rising incidence of HIV/AIDS have left many children orphaned or homeless and, as a result, less likely to attend school.<sup>817</sup>

## Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Labor Code sets the minimum age for employment at 16 years. There is a gap between the minimum legal age that children are allowed to work and the age at which schooling is no longer compulsory, 12 years. Exceptions are made for light, non-hazardous work or apprenticeships, provided that the work is not dangerous to the health of the child and does not interfere with normal childhood development or education.<sup>818</sup> Children under the age of 18 are prohibited from working at night.<sup>819</sup> Since 1999, the Government of Burundi has submitted to the ILO a list or an equivalent document identifying the types of work that it has determined are harmful to the health, safety or morals of children under Convention 182 or Convention 138.<sup>820</sup> The Labor Code amendment of 1993 calls for inspections of workplaces and permits

---

<sup>809</sup> Aloys Niyoyita, "Burundi schools packed after fees scrapped," *The Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, September 19, 2005; available from <http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/printer/ap.asp?category=1105&slug=Burundi%20Free%20Education> [hard copy on file].

<sup>810</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>811</sup> BBC News, "Burundians flock to free schools", [online], September 19, 2005 [cited January 12, 2006]; available from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/4260092.stm>. The education and culture ministry has estimated that Burundi needs 2,400 new classrooms and 2,400 new teachers to provide education to the influx of new students. Integrated Regional Information Networks, "Burundi: Free schooling starts with huge logistical problems", IRINnews.org, [online], September 19, 2005 [cited December 10, 2005]; available from <http://www.irinnews.org/print.asp?ReportID=49129>. In another report, the government indicated that it needed to hire up to 3,500 new teachers. See Niyoyita, "Burundi schools packed."

<sup>812</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Burundi*.

<sup>813</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics, <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/TableViewer/tableView.aspx?ReportId=51> (Gross and Net Enrolment Ratios, Primary; accessed December 2005).

<sup>814</sup> *Enquete Nationale d'Evaluation des Conditions de vie de l'Enfant et de la Femme au Burundi (ENECEF-Burundi 2000)*, Institut de Statistiques et d'Etudes Economiques du Burundi, March, 2001, 20; available from <http://www.childinfo.org/MICS2/newreports/burundi/burundi1.pdf>.

<sup>815</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics, <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/TableViewer/tableView.aspx?ReportId=55> (School life expectancy, % of repeaters, survival rates; accessed December 2005).

<sup>816</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Burundi*, Section 5. See also Tony Jackson, *Equal Access to Education a peace imperative for Burundi*, International Alert, London, September, 2000, 8-9; available from [http://www.international-alert.org/pdf/pubgl/burun\\_ed\\_en.pdf](http://www.international-alert.org/pdf/pubgl/burun_ed_en.pdf).

<sup>817</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Burundi*, Section 5. See also S. Lyon L. Guarcello, F. Rosati, *Orphanhood and Child Vulnerability: Burundi*, Understanding Children's Work, September 2004; available from [http://www.ucw-project.org/pdf/publications/Burundi\\_orphans\\_countryreports.pdf](http://www.ucw-project.org/pdf/publications/Burundi_orphans_countryreports.pdf).

<sup>818</sup> *Decret loi no 1/037 du 7 juillet 1993 portant revision du Code du travail*, Article 126; available from <http://natlex.ilo.org/txt/F93BDI01.htm>.

<sup>819</sup> *Ibid.*, Article 119. Reports indicate that many children, however, do work at night in the informal sector. See U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Burundi*, Section 6d. See also U.S. Embassy- Bujumbura, *reporting*, August 18, 2003.

<sup>820</sup> ILO-IPEC official, email communication to USDOL official, November 14, 2005.

medical examination to determine if a child’s work causes undue physical stress.<sup>821</sup> According to the U.S. Department of State, the Ministry of Labor only enforces child labor laws when complaints are filed.<sup>822</sup>

The worst forms of child labor may be prosecuted under different statutes in Burundi. The Penal Code prohibits prostitution.<sup>823</sup> The minimum age of compulsory recruitment to armed forces is 16. Recruitment of children under 15 is considered a war crime and violators may face the death penalty.<sup>824</sup> The law does not specifically prohibit trafficking; however, traffickers can be prosecuted under laws against assault, kidnapping, smuggling, rape, prostitution, slavery, and fraud.<sup>825</sup> Child protection laws are reportedly difficult to enforce due to instability within the country.<sup>826</sup> According to the U.S. Department of State, the Government of Burundi is making significant efforts to comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking.<sup>827</sup>

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

As of February 2005, the National Structure for the Disarmament, Reintegration, and Prevention of Child Soldiers (SNES) had demobilized and reintegrated 2,920 child soldiers. The government worked with international organizations and NGOs to help reintegrate former child soldiers into civilian life by providing many types of material support. The government also conducted awareness-raising campaigns to facilitate former child soldiers’ reintegration into their local communities. The SNES conducted additional awareness-raising campaigns to prevent the further recruitment and use of child soldiers, with support from UNICEF, the World Bank, and NGOs.<sup>828</sup> The larger Burundi Emergency Demobilization, Reinsertion and Reintegration Program was launched in December 2004, and provides reintegration assistance to both adults and children.<sup>829</sup> Burundi is one of seven countries participating in a USDOL-funded ILO-IPEC program to prevent the involvement of

Selected Child Labor Measures Adopted by Governments		
Ratified Convention 138	7/19/2000	✓
Ratified Convention 182	6/11/2002	✓
ILO-IPEC Associated Member		✓
National Plan for Children		
National Child Labor Action Plan		
Sector Action Plan		

<sup>821</sup> *Decret loi no 1/037 du 7 juillet 1993 portant revision du Code du travail*. See also U.S. Embassy- Bujumbura, *reporting*, August 18, 2003. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Burundi*, Section 6d.

<sup>822</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Burundi*, Section 6d.

<sup>823</sup> An individual who entices or forces a person under the age of 21 into prostitution faces a fine of 10,000 to 100,000 francs (USD 9.30 to 93.04) and a prison sentence of up to 15 years. See Government of Burundi, *Offenses Against Public Morals*; available from <http://209.190.246.239/protectionproject/statutesPDF/BurundiF.pdf>. See also ECPAT International CSEC Database, (Burundi).

<sup>824</sup> Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, *Child Soldiers Global Report 2004: Burundi*.

<sup>825</sup> The Ministry of Reinsertion, Repatriation, and Reintegration and the Ministry of Institutional Reform, Human rights, and Parliamentary relations have responsibility for combating trafficking. See U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Burundi*, Section 5. If prosecuted under anti-slavery legislation, trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation may be punished by life imprisonment or death. See U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report*.

<sup>826</sup> ECPAT International CSEC Database, (Burundi).

<sup>827</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report*.

<sup>828</sup> Awareness raising campaigns include national media campaigns as well as training and advocacy at local levels. See *Ibid*.

<sup>829</sup> This program is funded in part by the World Bank. See World Bank, *Demobilization Starts in Burundi*, press release, Bujumbura, December 3, 2004; available from <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,contentMDK:20292016~menuPK:34467~pagePK:34370~piPK:34424~theSitePK:4607,00.html>.

children in armed conflict and support the rehabilitation of former child soldiers.<sup>830</sup> A *Juvenile Bureau* of the police protects children against abuse and sexual exploitation.<sup>831</sup>

In coordination with UNICEF, the Government of Burundi launched the “Back to School” campaign in late 2004 that aims to increase enrollment in primary schools.<sup>832</sup> The World Bank is funding several projects that include education components.<sup>833</sup>

---

<sup>830</sup> ILO-IPEC, *Prevention and Reintegration of Children Involved in Armed Conflict: an Inter-Regional Program*, project document, Geneva, September 17, 2003.

<sup>831</sup> ECPAT International CSEC Database, (Burundi).

<sup>832</sup> UNICEF, *Burundi's children back to school after years of conflict*, online, UNICEF, Bujumbura, October 14, 2004; available from [http://www.unicef.org/media/media\\_23640.html](http://www.unicef.org/media/media_23640.html).

<sup>833</sup> World Bank Projects Database, <http://www.worldbank.org> (Public Works and Employment Creation Project; accessed June 21, 2005), World Bank Projects Database, <http://www.worldbank.org> (Second Social Action Project; accessed June 21, 2005), World Bank Projects Database, <http://www.worldbank.org> (Supplemental Grant - Second Social Action Grant; accessed June 21, 2005), World Bank Projects Database, <http://www.worldbank.org> (Multisectoral HIV/AIDS Control and Orphans Project; accessed June 21, 2005).