

Rwanda

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

An estimated 27.3 percent of children ages 5 to 14 years were counted as working in Rwanda in 2000. Approximately 29.9 percent of all boys 5 to 14 were working compared with 24.8 percent of girls in the same age group.³⁹⁷⁷ Children are found working in several sectors that the Government of Rwanda has identified as worst forms of child labor, including domestic work for third-party households;³⁹⁷⁸ agricultural work on tea, rice, and sugar cane plantations; brick making and quarry work; rock crushing; and prostitution. Children also work in small businesses and in the informal economy.³⁹⁷⁹ Child labor is one of many problems associated with poverty. In 2000, 51.7 percent of the population in Rwanda was living on less than USD 1 a day.³⁹⁸⁰

There are an estimated 6,000 street children in Rwanda,³⁹⁸¹ primarily in the capital of Kigali, and in provincial capitals. Street children work guarding cars and as porters, garbage collectors, and vendors, selling small items such as cigarettes and candy. Children who live on the streets, particularly girls, are at high risk of sexual abuse.³⁹⁸²

Estimates on the number of orphans in Rwanda vary. In 2002, UNAIDS, UNICEF and USAID estimated that more than 600,000 children were orphans in Rwanda.³⁹⁸³ The Government of Rwanda defines orphans as children who have lost one or both of their parents and estimates that there are 1,151,877 orphans, of which 182,625 have no parents. It is estimated that as many as 13 percent of all households are headed by children, particularly by girls.³⁹⁸⁴ Children who head households in Rwanda care for their siblings, engage in informal work activities, primarily in subsistence agriculture, for survival, and most of them do not

³⁹⁷⁷ 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.

³⁹⁷⁸ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2004: Rwanda*, Washington, D.C., February 28, 2005; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2004/41621.htm>. Some families who fostered orphans expected them to perform domestic work in exchange for room and board. These children were often unable to attend school. See *Lasting Wounds, Consequences of Genocide and War on Rwanda's Children*, Human Rights Watch, New York, March, 2003, 49-50.

³⁹⁷⁹ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Rwanda*, Section 6d. See also Human Rights Watch, *Rwanda - Lasting Wounds: Consequences of Genocide and War for Rwanda's Children*, Vol. 15, No. 6, New York, March 2003, 63; available from <http://www.hrw.org>. See also U.S. Embassy- Kigali, conference call with USDOL official, February 24, 2004.

³⁹⁸⁰ World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2005* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2005.

³⁹⁸¹ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Rwanda*, Section 5.

³⁹⁸² Human Rights Watch, *Lasting Wounds*, 62-63.

³⁹⁸³ Of this number (613,000), approximately 43 percent, or 264,000, have been orphaned by AIDS. See *Children on the Brink 2002: A Joint Report on Orphan Estimates and Program Strategies*, UNAIDS, UNICEF, and USAID, July, 2002, 22.

³⁹⁸⁴ Thirteen percent represents 227,500 families. Human Rights Watch, *Lasting Wounds*, 47. Estimates of the number of child-headed households vary. The U.S. Department of State estimates that there are at least 65,000 child-headed households in Rwanda. See U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Rwanda*, Section 5. In 2001, the International Rescue Committee estimated that there were 45,000 child-headed households in Rwanda, and that 90% were headed by girls. See Jill Donahue John Williamson, and Lynne Cripe, *A Participatory Review of the Reunification, Reintegration, and Youth Development Program of the International Rescue Committee in Rwanda*, USAID, July, 2001, 2. The 2002 census estimated that there were 15,052 child-headed households and UNICEF estimates there are 106,000 such households. See U.S. Embassy- Kigali, email communication, August 11, 2006.

have adequate access to health or education services. Girls who head households are particularly vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation,³⁹⁸⁵ such as the exchange of sex for food, protection, school fees and other services.³⁹⁸⁶

Rwanda has been a source country for the trafficking of children to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) for forced labor and soldiering for the last decade.³⁹⁸⁷ Rwanda has also been a source country for the trafficking of children for sexual exploitation.³⁹⁸⁸ In 2005, a panel of UN experts reported that the Rwandan government Defense Forces were recruiting Congolese children living in refugee camps in Rwanda and training them to be soldiers in late 2004-early 2005. The Government of Rwanda denied all of charges in the report, and has publicly denounced the practice of recruiting child soldiers.³⁹⁸⁹ It has also been reported that armed groups from the DRC (suspected of being part of the Congolese Rally for Democracy-Goma) recruited children from Rwandan refugee camps in 2005. Allegations that the Rwandan government was involved in the recruitment of child soldiers by the DRC-based armed groups were met with a government investigation into the incidents. The Rwandan government has stated that it was not the government's policy to recruit child soldiers.³⁹⁹⁰

The Constitution guarantees children in Rwanda free, compulsory primary education from the ages of 7 to 12 years.³⁹⁹¹ In 2002, the gross primary enrollment rate was 122 percent and the net primary enrollment rate was 87 percent.³⁹⁹² 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, 55.3 percent of children ages 5 to 14 years were attending school.³⁹⁹³ As of 2001, 47 percent of children who started primary school were likely to reach grade five.³⁹⁹⁴

Although primary school fees were officially waived in 2004, most families are still required to pay fees to cover the costs of school operations. For orphaned children, school fees were typically waived. Many schools lack basic supplies and the capacity to accommodate all primary school-age children.³⁹⁹⁵ Over half of primary school teachers lack basic qualifications.³⁹⁹⁶ Private schools are inaccessible or too costly for the majority of the population.³⁹⁹⁷

³⁹⁸⁵ U.S. Embassy- Kigali, *reporting*, November 17, 2005. See also Human Rights Watch, *Lasting Wounds*, 47-48.

³⁹⁸⁶ Pdraig Quigley Angela Veale, Theoneste Ndibeshye, and Celestin Nyirimihigo, *Struggling to Survive: Orphan and Community Dependent Children in Rwanda*, Government of Rwanda and UNICEF, 2001, xv. Human Rights Watch, *Lasting Wounds*.

³⁹⁸⁷ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2005: Rwanda*, Washington, D.C., March 8, 2006; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005>.

³⁹⁸⁸ U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report 2006- Rwanda*, Washington, D.C., June 3, 2006; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2006..>

³⁹⁸⁹ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports 2006: Rwanda*, Section 2d. and Section 5.

³⁹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁹¹ In some cases, children as young as 6 years can enroll in primary school. UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Second Periodic Reports on States Parties due in 1998, CRC/C/70Add.22*, prepared by Government of Rwanda, pursuant to Article 44 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, October 8, 2003, para 81. U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Rwanda*, Section 5.

³⁹⁹² UNESCO Institute for Statistics, <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/TableViewer/tableView.aspx?ReportId=51> (Gross and Net Enrolment Ratios, Primary; accessed December 2005). For an explanation of gross primary enrollment rates that are greater than 100 percent, please see the definition of gross primary enrollment rates in the "Data Sources and Definitions" section of this report.

³⁹⁹³ UCW analysis of ILO SIMPOC, UNICEF MICS, and World Bank surveys, *Child Economic Activity and School Attendance Rates*.

³⁹⁹⁴ UNESCO Institute for Statistics, <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/TableViewer/tableView.aspx?ReportId=55> (School life expectancy, % of repeaters, survival rates; accessed December 2005).

³⁹⁹⁵ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Rwanda*, Section 5.

³⁹⁹⁶ Human Rights Watch, *Lasting Wounds, Lasting Wounds*, pg. 50. 50.

³⁹⁹⁷ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Rwanda*, Section 5.

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Labor Code establishes the minimum age of employment at 16 years.³⁹⁹⁸ However, the Minister of Labor can make exceptions for children aged 14 to 16, depending on the circumstances, and allow children to work with parental permission. There is a gap between the minimum legal age that children are allowed to work (16 years) and the age at which children's schooling is no longer compulsory (12 years). Children under the age of 16 years are allowed to work with their parents' or guardians' permission, but are prohibited from working between 7 p.m. and 5 a.m. or performing any work deemed hazardous or difficult, as determined by the Minister of Labor, and must have at least 12 hours of rest between work engagements.³⁹⁹⁹ The minimum age for apprenticeships is 14 years, provided that the child has finished primary school.⁴⁰⁰⁰

The worst forms of child labor may be prosecuted under different statutes in Rwanda. Forced labor is prohibited by Article 4 of the Labor Code.⁴⁰⁰¹ The Criminal Code prohibits prostitution and compelling another person to become engaged in prostitution. These crimes are punishable by imprisonment for up to 5 years and a fine. Penalties are doubled if the crime is committed against a minor under the age of 18 years.⁴⁰⁰² There are also provisions for child rape and forced marriage in Rwandan law.⁴⁰⁰³ Trafficking is not specifically prohibited by law. However, laws against slavery, forced prostitution, kidnapping, and child labor can be used to prosecute traffickers.⁴⁰⁰⁴ Law No. 27/2001, Relating to the Rights and Protection of the Child against Violence, sets the minimum age for military service at 18.⁴⁰⁰⁵ According to the U.S. Department of State, the Government of Rwanda is making significant efforts to comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking.⁴⁰⁰⁶

According to the U.S. Department of State, the Government of Rwanda made an effort to prevent and reduce the occurrence of child labor, however, the Ministry of Public Service and Labor and the Ministry of Local Government do not have sufficient resources to effectively enforce or prosecute the child labor laws.⁴⁰⁰⁷ The Ministry of Labor maintains one office that is responsible for children's issues, but it is significantly under-funded.⁴⁰⁰⁸

³⁹⁹⁸ Law No. 51/2001 Establishing the Labour Code, (December 12, 2001), Article 11; available from www.rwandainvest.gov.rw/lawlab.htm.

³⁹⁹⁹ Ibid., Articles 11, 60-66. U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Rwanda*, Section 6d.

⁴⁰⁰⁰ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Rwanda*, Section 6d.

⁴⁰⁰¹ *Labour Code*, Article 4.

⁴⁰⁰² Government of Rwanda, *Criminal Code, as cited in the Protection Project Database*, [online database] [cited May 17, 2004], Articles 363-365, 374 [no longer available online]; available from <http://www.protectionproject.org>.

⁴⁰⁰³ U.S. Embassy- Kigali, *reporting*, November 17, 2005.

⁴⁰⁰⁴ U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2005: Rwanda*.

⁴⁰⁰⁵ The law was passed in April 2001, and entered into force in 2002. The law, however, does not apply to military service in the Local Defense Forces. See *Lasting Wounds*, 16.

⁴⁰⁰⁶ U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2005: Rwanda*.

⁴⁰⁰⁷ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Rwanda*, Section 6d.

⁴⁰⁰⁸ U.S. Embassy- Kigali, conference call, February 24, 2004. See also U.S. Embassy- Kigali, *reporting*, August 23, 2004. See U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Rwanda*, Section 6d.

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

In January 2005, the Ministry of Labor convened the first meeting of the Child Labor Forum, which seeks to address the child labor problems that are facing Rwanda, including child prostitution.⁴⁰⁰⁹ UNICEF is funding several projects targeting children who are working in sectors identified as worst forms of child labor.⁴⁰¹⁰ The Ministry of Public Service, Skills Development, and Labor recently conducted an education campaign on child labor, including radio and television programs.⁴⁰¹¹ As part of a package of judicial reforms, “child issues courts” were created in late 2004 to

deal with child labor violations and other abuses against children, but they are not yet functional.⁴⁰¹² Rwanda is one of four countries participating in a USDOL-funded Child Labor Education Initiative project, implemented by World Vision, to provide access to quality basic education for HIV/AIDS-affected children involved in or at risk of becoming engaged in exploitive child labor.⁴⁰¹³

Rwanda has a National Policy for Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children, which includes strategies to address child labor.⁴⁰¹⁴ The Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion has drafted a 5-year Action Plan of Orphans and Vulnerable Children⁴⁰¹⁵ and also works with NGOs to provide working children, including children exploited in prostitution, with housing, medical services, and vocational education.⁴⁰¹⁶ The government currently works with NGOs to assist child-headed households and sensitize local officials to their needs.⁴⁰¹⁷ Local authorities have also sent children found on the streets to foster homes or government-run facilities. In each of the 12 provinces, the government supports safe houses for street children, where they can receive shelter and basic services.⁴⁰¹⁸ UNICEF also works with the government to support efforts to eliminate exploitative child labor and assist orphans and other children in need of special protection.⁴⁰¹⁹

The Rwanda Demobilization and Reintegration Commission, through a special division on “ex-child soldiers,” continued to implement a program to demobilize child soldiers. Many child soldiers returning

Selected Child Labor Measures Adopted by Governments		
Ratified Convention 138	4/15/1981	✓
Ratified Convention 182	5/23/2000	✓
ILO-IPEC Associated Member		✓
National Plan for Children		✓
National Child Labor Action Plan		
Sector Action Plan		

⁴⁰⁰⁹ The Forum includes government ministries and donors. See U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2005: Rwanda*.

⁴⁰¹⁰ These projects target children working in domestic service, on sugar cane plantations, in brickyards and quarries, and being exploited in prostitution. ILO-IPEC, *Prevention and Reintegration of Children Involved in Armed Conflict: an Inter-Regional Program*, technical progress report, INT/03/P52/USA, Geneva, March 2005.

⁴⁰¹¹ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Rwanda*, Section 6d.

⁴⁰¹² U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2005: Rwanda*.

⁴⁰¹³ World Vision, *Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Ethiopia Together (KURET)*, status report, December 2005.

⁴⁰¹⁴ Republic of Rwanda, *National Policy for Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children in Rwanda*, Ministry of Local Government, Information and Social Affairs, 2003.

⁴⁰¹⁵ This plan is currently being prepared for cabinet approval. See ILO-IPEC, *Prevention and Reintegration of Children Involved in Armed Conflict, March 2005*.

⁴⁰¹⁶ U.S. Embassy- Kigali, *reporting*, November 17, 2005.

⁴⁰¹⁷ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Rwanda*, Section 5.

⁴⁰¹⁸ Ibid. See also U.S. Embassy- Kigali, *reporting*, August 14, 2003. The government also offers assistance by running “solidarity camps” for street children. U.S. Embassy- Kigali, conference call, February 24, 2004.

⁴⁰¹⁹ UNICEF, *At a glance: Rwanda, the big picture*, [cited June 18, 2005]; available from <http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/rwanda.html>.

from the DRC participated in the program.⁴⁰²⁰ The second phase of the demobilization of Rwandan children was completed in 2005.⁴⁰²¹ The government operates a demobilization center for child soldiers returning from the DRC that provides counseling, medical screening, family mediation, clothing, and schooling. A total of approximately 600 former child soldiers have received care and services at the center.⁴⁰²² Rwanda is one of seven countries participating in a USDOL-funded ILO-IPEC program to prevent the involvement of children in armed conflict and support the rehabilitation of former child soldiers.⁴⁰²³ The National Poverty Reduction Program, the Local Development Program through Labor-Intensive Public Works, and other local initiatives also provide opportunities for former child soldiers.⁴⁰²⁴

In an effort to curb trafficking and sexual exploitation of children, the government includes training on sex crimes and crimes against children in the police training curriculum. The government also monitors immigration patterns and border areas accessible by road.⁴⁰²⁵ In partnership with a local NGO, the government supports healthcare services and vocational training for children involved in prostitution. In late 2004-early 2005, the government ran campaigns to raise public awareness about child sexual exploitation.⁴⁰²⁶

The Government of Rwanda provides assistance for orphans and other indigent children to attend secondary school through two funds.⁴⁰²⁷ The Ministry of Education also offers “catch up” classes for children who have dropped out of school to work in the labor market,⁴⁰²⁸ and has recently assumed responsibility for vocational training activities.⁴⁰²⁹ The World Bank is implementing a 6-year, USD 35 million program that began in 2000 to build the capacity of the Ministry of Education. The program’s objectives are to increase access to primary schools, including school construction, improve teacher training and curriculum development, provide more textbooks, and strengthen the administration of and community involvement in the educational system.⁴⁰³⁰ UNICEF, in cooperation with other donors, is supporting the establishment of the government’s National Education Statistical Information System, and has established a national Education for All committee.⁴⁰³¹ The World Food Program, in collaboration with

⁴⁰²⁰ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Rwanda*, Section 5. See also ILO-IPEC, *Prevention and Reintegration of Children Involved in Armed Conflict: an Inter-Regional Program, country annex*, INT/03/P52/USA, Geneva, 2005.

⁴⁰²¹ The second phase, which lasted from 2002 to 2005, was expected to demobilize 2,500 children from Rwandan armed groups that were operating in the DRC. As of December 2004, only 560 children had been demobilized. See ILO-IPEC, *Prevention and Reintegration of Children Involved in Armed Conflict, country annex*.

⁴⁰²² U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2005: Rwanda*, Section 5. See also U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2005: Rwanda*. The RDRC maintains three demobilization centers, one of which is dedicated exclusively to rehabilitating children who were formerly soldiers. U.S. Embassy- Kigali, *reporting*, November 17, 2005. The demobilization center for children is located in Ruhengeri Province. U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2005: Rwanda*, Section 5.

⁴⁰²³ ILO-IPEC, *Prevention and Reintegration of Children Involved in Armed Conflict: an Inter-Regional Program*, project document, INT/03/P52/USA, Geneva, September 30, 2003.

⁴⁰²⁴ ILO-IPEC, *Prevention and Reintegration of Children Involved in Armed Conflict, country annex*.

⁴⁰²⁵ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Rwanda*, Section 5. The Rwandan National Police trained 185 of its officers to recognize child trafficking in 2004. U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2005: Rwanda*.

⁴⁰²⁶ U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2005: Rwanda*.

⁴⁰²⁷ One fund is administered by the Ministry of Local Government and Social Affairs, and provides only partial educational assistance for secondary school, and the other, The Fund for Assistance of Genocide Survivors, is a quasi-governmental agency that supports genocide survivors by providing for their basic needs, including the full amount of their school fees. Reports indicate that these funds do not sufficiently meet the needs of the target population. In some cases, budget shortfalls have led to delayed school fee payments, causing children to drop out of school. See *Lasting Wounds*, 51-52.

⁴⁰²⁸ This accelerated learning project was designed to enable working children to reach an academic level equal to that of their peers. U.S. Embassy- Kigali, *reporting*, August 23, 2004. See also UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Summary Record: Rwanda, CRC/C/SR.954, CRC/C/SR.954*, prepared by Government of Rwanda, pursuant to Article 44 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, June 3, 2004, para 40; available from [http://www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(Symbol\)/5c472357037a0f37c1256ead0031a9ed?Opendocument](http://www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/5c472357037a0f37c1256ead0031a9ed?Opendocument).

⁴⁰²⁹ ILO-IPEC, *Prevention and Reintegration of Children Involved in Armed Conflict, March 2005*. The Ministry of Labor was in the process of developing vocational training centers in each of the 12 provinces. See U.S. Embassy- Kigali, *reporting*, August 23, 2004.

⁴⁰³⁰ World Bank Projects Database, <http://www.worldbank.org> (Human Resource Development Project; accessed June 21, 2005).

⁴⁰³¹ This committee has taken up the issue of girls’ education. UNICEF, *At a glance: Rwanda, the big picture*.

the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, is implementing school feeding programs to encourage school attendance in place of child labor.⁴⁰³²

⁴⁰³² U.S. Embassy- Kigali, *reporting*, August 23, 2004.