

## Gabon

<i>Selected Statistics and Indicators on Child Labor</i>	
Percent of children 5-14 estimated as working:	Unavailable
Minimum age for admission to work:	16 <sup>1666</sup>
Age to which education is compulsory:	16 <sup>1667</sup>
Free public education:	Yes <sup>1668*</sup>
Gross primary enrollment rate in 2004:	130% <sup>1669</sup>
Net primary enrollment rate in 2001:	77% <sup>1670</sup>
Percent of children 5-14 attending school:	Unavailable
As of 2002, percent of primary school entrants likely to reach grade 5:	69% <sup>1671</sup>
Ratified Convention 138:	No <sup>1672</sup>
Ratified Convention 182:	3/28/2001 <sup>1673</sup>
ILO-IPEC Participating Country:	Yes <sup>1674</sup>
*Must pay for school supplies and related items.	

### Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

Child labor and human trafficking are closely related in Gabon.<sup>1675</sup> Children are trafficked into the country from Benin, Guinea, Nigeria, Mali, and Togo, and to a lesser extent from Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Liberia, and Sierra Leone.<sup>1676</sup> Trafficked boys are subject to forced labor in small workshops and as street vendors, while girls who have been trafficked work as domestic servants and in the informal commercial sector, including in restaurants and market vending.<sup>1677</sup> Children trafficked from Nigeria are found working as mechanics.<sup>1678</sup> Children are also trafficked to Gabon for commercial sexual exploitation. There are reports of girls who were trafficked for domestic labor escaping their employers and then facing sexual abuse and exploitation in prostitution.<sup>1679</sup> Poor families in surrounding countries send their children with

<sup>1666</sup> Government of Gabon, *Code du travail*, Loi no 3/94, (November 21, 1994), Article 6; available from <http://natlex.ilo.org/txt/F94GAB01.htm>.

<sup>1667</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Gabon," 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/2006/78735.htm>.

<sup>1668</sup> Ibid. See also Right to Education, *Table 2: The Law and Practice in Sub-Saharan Africa*, [online] December 2005 [cited September 28, 2006]; available from <http://www.right-to-education.org/>.

<sup>1669</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics, *Gross Enrolment Ratio. Primary. Total*, accessed December 20, 2006; available from <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/>.

<sup>1670</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics, *Net Enrolment Rate. Primary. Total*, accessed December 20, 2006; available from <http://stats.uis.unesco.org>.

<sup>1671</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics, *Survival Rate to Grade 5. Total*, accessed December 18, 2006; available from <http://stats.uis.unesco.org>.

<sup>1672</sup> ILO, *Ratifications by Country*, accessed September 25, 2006; available from <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/ratifice.pl?Gabon>.

<sup>1673</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1674</sup> 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](http://www.ilo.org/iloroot/docstore/ipcc/prod/eng/20061019_Implementationreport_eng_Web.pdf).

<sup>1675</sup> U.S. Embassy- Libreville, *reporting*, December 8, 2006.

<sup>1676</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Gabon (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>.

<sup>1677</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1678</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2006: Gabon," Section 5.

<sup>1679</sup> ECPAT International CSEC Database, *Gabon*, accessed September 20, 2006; available from <http://www.ecpat.net/>. See also The Protection Project, "Gabon," in *2005 Human Rights Report on Trafficking in*

traffickers to live and work in the homes of affluent Gabonese families in exchange for an education and/or monthly wages. Trafficked children, however, reportedly receive only rudimentary room and board, are denied educational opportunities, and seldom receive wages.<sup>1680</sup> Trafficked children work long hours and are subject to physical abuse.<sup>1681</sup>

### **Child Labor Laws and Enforcement**

The law sets the minimum age for employment at 16 years. Younger children, however, may work with the consent of the Ministries of Labor, Education, and Public Health. Children between 14 and 16 years may work as apprentices with permission from the Ministry of National Education.<sup>1682</sup> The employment of children in jobs that are unsuitable for them because of their age, state, or condition, or that interfere with their education is also prohibited.<sup>1683</sup> Children under 16 years who have been removed from exploitive labor must be placed in appropriate reception or transit centers.<sup>1684</sup> Children under 18 years are prohibited from working at night in industrial establishments, except in family enterprises; however, children over 16 years are permitted to work in certain industries that, by their nature, must be continued at night, such as the refinement of sugar and firing steel and sheet metal.<sup>1685</sup> The law imposes a fine for violations of minimum age laws and a larger fine along with a prison term of 2 to 6 months for repeat violators.<sup>1686</sup>

Gabon's trafficking law outlines measures to protect children under 18 years from trafficking and stipulates imprisonment and a fine for perpetrators.<sup>1687</sup> Trafficked children must be repatriated to their country of origin at the expense of their employer or guardian.<sup>1688</sup> Gabonese law also prohibits forced labor, slavery, abduction, and pimping.<sup>1689</sup> The penalty for imposing forced labor is a fine, and recurring violations are punishable with imprisonment for 2 to 6 months and a heavier fine.<sup>1690</sup> Procurement of a minor for the purpose of prostitution is

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*Persons, Especially Women and Children*, Washington, DC, 2005; available from <http://www.protectionproject.org>. See also Integrated Regional Information Networks, "GABON: Laws fail to curb child trafficking racket", IRINnews.org, [online], February 4, 2005 [cited September 20, 2006]; available from <http://irinnews.org/print.asp?ReportID=45400>.

<sup>1680</sup> ECPAT International CSEC Database, *Gabon*. See also The Protection Project, "2005 Human Rights Report on Trafficking in Persons: Gabon." See also Integrated Regional Information Networks, "GABON: Laws fail to curb child trafficking racket".

<sup>1681</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2006: Gabon," Section 5.

<sup>1682</sup> Government of Gabon, *Code du travail*, Articles 82 and 177.

<sup>1683</sup> *Ibid.*, Article 6.

<sup>1684</sup> ILO, *The Effective Abolition of Child Labour*, 2003; available from <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/decl/download/review03/childlabour.pdf>.

<sup>1685</sup> Government of Gabon, *Code du travail*, Articles 167 and 168.

<sup>1686</sup> *Ibid.*, Article 195.

<sup>1687</sup> ILO, *Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention) 1999 (No. 182) Gabon*, Observation, CEACR 2005/76th Session, Geneva, 2005; available from <http://webfusion.ilo.org/public/db/standards/normes/appl/appl-displaycomment.cfm?hdroff=1&ctry=2610&year=2005&type=O&conv=C182&lang=EN>.

<sup>1688</sup> ILO, *The Effective Abolition of Child Labor*.

<sup>1689</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Gabon (Tier 2)," in *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2005*, Washington, DC, June 3, 2005; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2005/46613.htm>.

<sup>1690</sup> Government of Gabon, *Code du travail*, Article 195.

punishable by imprisonment for 2 to 5 years and a fine.<sup>1691</sup> The minimum age for voluntary recruitment into the military is 20 years; there is no conscription.<sup>1692</sup>

The Government of Gabon purchased 10 patrol boats for its security forces and navy to in part combat maritime child trafficking, and Gabonese security forces conducted a series of anti-trafficking sweeps that resulted in suspected traffickers being handed over to prosecutors.<sup>1693</sup> As of June 2006, two child trafficking cases were being prosecuted; five individuals remained in police custody under investigation, and the remaining 15 cases had been dismissed.<sup>1694</sup>

Minimum age laws for the protection of Gabonese children were strictly enforced in urban areas, but rarely in rural areas.<sup>1695</sup> Theoretically, the law also protects foreign children in Gabon, many who are victims of child trafficking, but these victims rarely report abuse.<sup>1696</sup> The Ministry of Justice is responsible for the enforcement of child labor laws, while the Ministry of Labor is charged with receiving, investigating, and addressing child labor complaints. However, the U.S. Department of State reported that the number of labor inspectors was inadequate, and complaints were not routinely investigated.<sup>1697</sup>

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

The government has undertaken several measures to raise awareness of trafficking issues and the anti-trafficking law, including the organization of town hall meetings by the Ministry of Justice, extensive coverage of trafficking stories by the government-controlled media, and placement of anti-trafficking posters in schools and other public venues with the help of UNICEF.<sup>1698</sup> The government established a National Programme of Action to combat child trafficking, and a National Plan to Fight against Child Labor.<sup>1699</sup>

The Government of Gabon participates in a USD 9.3 million regional USDOL-funded ILO-IPEC project to combat the trafficking of children for exploitive labor in West and Central Africa (LUTRENA) that targets 9,000 children for withdrawal and prevention.<sup>1700</sup> Additionally, the Governments of Gabon and Nigeria have a signed agreement that all Nigerian child trafficking victims are placed directly with the Nigerian Embassy.<sup>1701</sup> With funding from the U.S. Department of State, UNICEF and Caritas Gabon are constructing a shelter for victims of child

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<sup>1691</sup> Government of Gabon, *Penal Code*, Articles 260 and 261; available from [hard copy on file].

<sup>1692</sup> Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, "Gabon," in *Child Soldiers Global Report 2004*, London, 2004; available from [http://www.child-soldiers.org/document\\_get.php?id=774](http://www.child-soldiers.org/document_get.php?id=774).

<sup>1693</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Trafficking in Persons Report- 2006: Gabon." See also U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2006: Gabon," Section 5.

<sup>1694</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Trafficking in Persons Report- 2006: Gabon."

<sup>1695</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2006: Gabon," Section 6d.

<sup>1696</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1697</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1698</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Trafficking in Persons Report- 2006: Gabon."

<sup>1699</sup> ILO-IPEC, *Combating the Trafficking in Children for Labour Exploitation in West and Central Africa (LUTRENA), Phase III*, technical progress report, Geneva, March 2005, 3. See also ECPAT International CSEC Database, *Gabon*.

<sup>1700</sup> 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.

<sup>1701</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Trafficking in Persons Report- 2006: Gabon."

trafficking, which will revert to the government after 5 years.<sup>1702</sup> UNICEF has also worked to raise awareness on child trafficking through workshops and seminars, radio and television messages, and posters.<sup>1703</sup> In collaboration with UNICEF, the government operates a toll-free hotline for child trafficking victims. The call center provides trafficking victims with free transportation to a shelter.<sup>1704</sup>

In July 2006, 24 of the 26 governments represented in the ECOWAS and the ECASS participated in a Joint Ministerial Conference on Trafficking in Persons held in Nigeria to develop a common understanding of trafficking in West and Central Africa and to adopt a common set of strategies against trafficking. During the Ministerial Conference, Gabon was 1 of 24 countries to adopt the Multilateral Cooperative Agreement to Combat Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, in West and Central Africa and the Joint Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children in the West and Central African Regions.<sup>1705</sup> As part of the Multilateral Cooperative Agreement, the governments agreed to put into place the child trafficking monitoring system developed by the U.S. Department of Labor-funded, ILO-IPEC LUTRENA project; to improve management and control of borders, including ensuring that birth certificates and travel identity documents cannot easily be falsified or altered; to assist each other in the investigation, arrest and prosecution of trafficking offenders; to protect, rehabilitate and reintegrate trafficking victims; and to improve educational systems, vocational training and apprenticeships.<sup>1706</sup>

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<sup>1702</sup> U.S. Embassy- Libreville, *US to Fund a Center for Victims of Child Trafficking*, [online] [cited September 21, 2006]; available from [http://libreville.usembassy.gov/us\\_to\\_fund\\_a\\_center\\_for\\_victims\\_of\\_child\\_trafficking.html](http://libreville.usembassy.gov/us_to_fund_a_center_for_victims_of_child_trafficking.html). See also ILO-IPEC, *Combating the Trafficking of Children for Labour Exploitation in West and Central Africa (LUTRENA)*, technical progress report, Washington, DC, September 2006, 3.

<sup>1703</sup> UNICEF, *At a Glance: Gabon*, [online] [cited September 18, 2006]; available from <http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/gabon.html>.

<sup>1704</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Trafficking in Persons Report- 2006: Gabon." See also U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2006: Gabon," Section 5.

<sup>1705</sup> ILO-IPEC, *LUTRENA, September 2006 technical progress report*. See also Catholic Relief Services official, E-mail communication to USDOL official, October 2, 2006.

<sup>1706</sup> ECOWAS and ECASS, *Multilateral Cooperative Agreement to Combat Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, in West and Central Africa*, Abuja, July 7, 2006. See also ILO-IPEC, *LUTRENA, September 2006 technical progress report*. See also Emmanuel Goujon, "African States Sign Up to Fight Human Trafficking," *Agence France-Presse*, July 7, 2006.