

Mauritania

<i>Selected Statistics and Indicators on Child Labor</i>	
Percent of children 5-14 estimated as working:	Unavailable
Minimum age for admission to work:	14 ²⁷²¹
Age to which education is compulsory:	14 ²⁷²²
Free public education:	Yes ²⁷²³
Gross primary enrollment rate in 2004:	94% ²⁷²⁴
Net primary enrollment rate in 2004:	74% ²⁷²⁵
Percent of children 7-14 attending school in 1996:	41.8% ²⁷²⁶
As of 2003, percent of primary school entrants likely to reach grade 5:	82% ²⁷²⁷
Ratified Convention 138:	12/3/2001 ²⁷²⁸
Ratified Convention 182:	12/3/2001 ²⁷²⁹
ILO-IPEC Participating Country:	No ²⁷³⁰

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

In rural areas in Mauritania, children frequently work with their families in activities such as farming, herding, and fishing.²⁷³¹ Children perform a wide range of urban informal activities, such as driving donkey carts to deliver water, street vending, and domestic work. They also work in small family businesses, construction and as auto mechanics.²⁷³² In addition, girls from remote areas of the country work as unpaid domestic servants in urban households, and Mauritanian boys (*talibes*) living with Koranic teachers are forced to beg, in some regions for more than 12 hours a day without adequate food and shelter provisions.²⁷³³ In remote areas of

²⁷²¹ Government of Mauritania, *Code du travail, 2004*, Loi No. 2004-017, (July 2004), Article 153.

²⁷²² UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Written Replies by the Government of Mauritania Concerning the List of Issues CRC/C/Q/MAU/1*, prepared by Government of Mauritania, pursuant to Additional report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, August 16, 2001; available from <http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu2/6/crc/doc/replies/wr-mauritania-1.pdf>.

²⁷²³ U.S. Department of State, "Mauritania," 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/2006/78746.htm>.

²⁷²⁴ UNESCO Institute for Statistics, *Gross Enrolment Ratio. Primary. Total*, accessed December 20, 2006; available from <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/>.

²⁷²⁵ UNESCO Institute for Statistics, *Net Enrolment Rate. Primary. Total*, accessed December 20, 2006; available from <http://stats.uis.unesco.org>.

²⁷²⁶ UCW analysis of ILO SIMPOC, UNICEF MICS, and World Bank surveys, *Child Economic Activity and School Attendance Rates*, March 1, 2007.

²⁷²⁷ UNESCO Institute for Statistics, *Survival Rate to Grade 5. Total*, accessed December 18, 2006; available from <http://stats.uis.unesco.org>.

²⁷²⁸ ILO, *Ratifications by Country*, accessed October 11, 2006; available from <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/newratframeE.htm>.

²⁷²⁹ Ibid.

²⁷³⁰ 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.

²⁷³¹ U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2006: Mauritania," Section 6d.

²⁷³² Ibid. See also U.S. Embassy- Nouakchott, *reporting*, August 30, 2005. See also U.S. Embassy- Nouakchott, *reporting*, August 18, 2004.

²⁷³³ U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2006: Mauritania," Section 5 and 6d. See also U.S. Department of State, "Mauritania (Tier 2 Watch List)," in *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2006*, Washington, DC, June 5, 2006; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2006/65989.htm>.

the country where the economy continues to rely on traditional labor and barter arrangements, such as the practice of slavery and indentured servitude that have historically been utilized in Saharan communities, children continued to be exploited in slave-like practices and actual slavery itself. Mauritania is also a source and destination country for trafficking in children for forced labor. Young girls are trafficked to Mali and within Mauritania to serve as domestic servants. Mauritanian boys trafficked within the country are often forced to work as beggars as part of their religious instruction through the Koranic schools.²⁷³⁴

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The law sets the minimum age for employment at 14 years unless the child has not yet completed the 9 years of compulsory education in which case the minimum working age may be raised.²⁷³⁵ At 12 years, children may perform light work in establishments where their family members are employed, provided that they have the Minister of Labor's authorization and maintain their schooling.²⁷³⁶ However, 12-year-olds may not work more than 2 hours a day, with the total combined hours of school and work not to exceed 7 hours a day, and the work must not be harmful to their normal development.²⁷³⁷ Children under 14 may not work on Fridays or public holidays, and children under 16 are prohibited from night work.²⁷³⁸ The law also bans children under 18 years from work that is beyond their strength or is likely to harm their safety, health, or morals.²⁷³⁹ Employers must maintain a registry of employed youths under 18, including hours worked.²⁷⁴⁰ Violation of Mauritania's child labor laws may result in a prison sentence of 15 days to 1 month and/or a fine.²⁷⁴¹

Mauritanian law defines the worst forms of child labor as all forms of slavery and exploitative work, work exceeding the physical capacity of a child or considered degrading, work connected to trafficking in children, and activities requiring children to handle chemicals or dangerous materials, work on Fridays or holidays, and work outside the country.²⁷⁴² With parental consent, or failing that, with permission from the Minister of Defense, children may enlist voluntarily in the military at 16. The law also requires every citizen to register for military service at 17, although there has been no active military registration in recent years.²⁷⁴³ Forced and

²⁷³⁴ U.S. Department of State, "Trafficking in Persons Report- 2006: Mauritania." See also U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2006: Mauritania," Section 5 and 6c.

²⁷³⁵ Government of Mauritania, *Code du travail, 2004*, Article 153.

²⁷³⁶ *Ibid.*, Articles 153-154.

²⁷³⁷ *Ibid.*, Article 154.

²⁷³⁸ *Ibid.*, Articles 155 and 164.

²⁷³⁹ *Ibid.*, Article 247. See also ILO NATLEX National Labor Law Database, *Arreté no. 239 du 17 septembere 1954*, accessed October 11, 2006; available from http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex_browse.details?p_lang=en&p_country=MRT&p_classification=04&p_origin=COUNTRY&p_sortby=SORTBY_COUNTRY.

²⁷⁴⁰ Government of Mauritania, *Code du travail, 2004*, Article 156.

²⁷⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Articles 449-450.

²⁷⁴² U.S. Embassy- Nouakchott, *reporting, August 18, 2004*.

²⁷⁴³ ILO Committee of Experts, *Direct Request, Worst Forms of Child Labor Convention, 1999 (No. 182) Mauritania (ratification: 2001)*, [online] 2005 [cited March 6, 2007]; available from <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/newcountryframeE.htm>. See also U.S. Embassy- Nouakchott official, E-mail communication to USDOL official, August 11, 2006. See Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, "Mauritania,"

compulsory labor and trafficking in persons are prohibited by law,²⁷⁴⁴ with the penalty for the trafficking of children being imprisonment for 5 to 10 years and a fine.²⁷⁴⁵ In addition, the law establishes penalties for engaging in prostitution or procuring prostitutes, ranging from fines to imprisonment for 2 to 5 years for cases involving minors.²⁷⁴⁶

The Ministry of Labor and Employment is the primary agency responsible for enforcing child labor laws and regulations. However, according to the U.S. Department of State, the labor inspectorate, which comprises only eight inspectors and six controllers, lacks the capacity to investigate and address potential violations because of a lack of resources.²⁷⁴⁷ The Ministry of Justice has established a technical commission to implement the anti-trafficking law, and the government hosted workshops on how to identify, investigate, and prosecute trafficking cases.²⁷⁴⁸ During 2006, approximately five trafficking cases were brought before the government for prosecution; however, in all cases, the State Prosecutor determined that the persons in question were not victims of trafficking.²⁷⁴⁹

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

In 2006, the Government of Mauritania created the National Commission for Human Rights responsible for coordinating government efforts to prevent trafficking and for operating six centers to provide food, shelter, and limited medical care to indigent people, including many boys living with Koranic teachers.²⁷⁵⁰ The Mauritanian Government also established the Commissariat for Human Rights, Poverty Alleviation and Insertion. The objectives of the commissariat include promoting literacy, education, health care, and addressing economic concerns as well as combating child labor and human trafficking.²⁷⁵¹ By October 2006, the government also developed an anti-trafficking action plan for its law enforcement agencies.²⁷⁵²

in *Child Soldiers Global Report 2004*, London, 2004; available from http://www.child-soldiers.org/document_get.php?id=785.

²⁷⁴⁴ Government of Mauritania, *Code du travail, 2004*, Article 5. See also ILO Committee of Experts, *Direct Request, Convention No. 182: Mauritania*.

²⁷⁴⁵ Government of Mauritania, *Public Comments to USDOL*, July 30, 2004. See also ILO Committee of Experts, *Direct Request, Worst Forms of Child Labor Convention, 1999 (No. 182) Mauritania (ratification: 2001)*, [online] 2005 [cited March 6, 2007]; available from <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/newcountryframeE.htm>.

²⁷⁴⁶ Government of Mauritania, *Ordonnance 83-162 du 09 juillet 1983 portant institution d'un Code pénal*, (July 9, 1983); available from <http://www.droit-afrique.com/images/textes/Mauritanie/Mauritanie%20-%20Code%20penal.pdf>.

²⁷⁴⁷ U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2006: Mauritania," Section 6d. See also U.S. Embassy- Nouakchott, *reporting*, December 11, 2006.

²⁷⁴⁸ U.S. Department of State, "Trafficking in Persons Report- 2006: Mauritania." See also U.S. Embassy- Nouakchott, *reporting*, , February 28, 2007.

²⁷⁴⁹ U.S. Embassy- Nouakchott, *reporting, February 28, 2007*.

²⁷⁵⁰ U.S. Department of State, "Trafficking in Persons Report- 2006: Mauritania." See also U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports- 2006: Mauritania," Section 5.

²⁷⁵¹ Mauritanian Government official, E-mail communication to USDOL official, December 15, 2006.

²⁷⁵² U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Interim Assessment*, Washington, DC, January 19, 2007; available from www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/rpt/78948.htm.