

Gabon

The Government of Gabon has implemented policies and programs focused on child trafficking. However, there is little information to assess the extent to which less publicized worst forms of child labor exist and need to be addressed.

Statistics on Working Children and School Attendance

Children	Percent
Working	Unavailable
Attending School	Unavailable
Combining Work and School	Unavailable



Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Children in Gabon are exploited in the worst forms of child labor,¹⁸⁸⁰ many of them trafficking victims from other countries, including Benin, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Nigeria, and Togo.¹⁸⁸¹ There have also been reports of internal trafficking of children, especially girls.¹⁸⁸²

The majority of trafficked children engage in domestic work, where they are vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse.¹⁸⁸³ Gabon is also a destination country for children from other African countries trafficked for forced labor—including in domestic work—and commercial sexual exploitation.¹⁸⁸⁴ Girls are trafficked for work in restaurants and for market vending.¹⁸⁸⁵ Boys are trafficked for forced street vending and forced labor in small workshops.¹⁸⁸⁶ Children are also engaged in prostitution.¹⁸⁸⁷ Children may also be trafficked to Gabon for forced labor in agriculture, animal husbandry, fishing, and mining.¹⁸⁸⁸

Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Labor Code sets the minimum age for employment at 16; however, younger children may be permitted to work with joint consent from the Ministries of Labor, Education, and Public Health. The minimum age for hazardous work is 18.¹⁸⁸⁹ There is no evidence that the Government has issued a




list of hazardous occupations as prescribed in ILO Convention No. 182. The Labor Code prohibits forced labor.¹⁸⁹⁰ Law 09/04, Preventing and Combating Child Trafficking, prohibits trafficking of children for labor.¹⁸⁹¹ Act No. 004/98 sets the minimum age for voluntary recruitment into the military at 20, and there is no conscription.¹⁸⁹² The Penal Code prohibits the procurement of a minor for prostitution, and Law No. 21/63-94 prohibits forced prostitution.¹⁸⁹³ Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement

The Interministerial Committee for the Fight Against Child Exploitation is the lead entity for combating exploitive child labor and facilitating communication within the Government. Its members are the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Human Rights, the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, and the Ministry of Labor.¹⁸⁹⁴ The committee is also charged with ensuring cooperation in the identification and protection of trafficking victims.¹⁸⁹⁵ In 2009, the Interministerial Committee had a budget of \$36,000 to fund investigations and coordinate action against all child exploitation, including child labor. Funding for the Interministerial Committee is insufficient and does not allow for investigations of all reported cases of child exploitation or for necessary interagency coordination and policy development.¹⁸⁹⁶

Inspectors from the Ministry of Labor are responsible for receiving, investigating, and addressing child labor

complaints, while the Ministry of Justice is responsible for the enforcement of child labor laws.¹⁸⁹⁷ The Council to Prevent and Combat the Trafficking of Children is responsible for identifying and removing child victims of trafficking in persons; however, there is no evidence that the Council is functioning as yet.¹⁸⁹⁸

The Government of Gabon maintains no records on the number of child labor investigations or the number of convictions. Officials at the Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of Justice estimate that the Government removed approximately 500 children from exploitive child labor situations over the last four years and prosecuted approximately 10 individuals during the reporting period.¹⁸⁹⁹

	C138, Minimum Age	No
	C182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
	CRC	✓
	CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	No
	CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography	✓
	Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	No
	Minimum Age for Work	16
	Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	18
	Compulsory Education Age	16
	Free Public Education	Yes

The Ministry of Justice continues to coordinate with other Government agencies to ensure that child victims of trafficking can stay in Gabon and receive proper care until cases can be prosecuted.¹⁹⁰⁰ By regional agreement, source countries in West and Central Africa, including Benin, Mali, Nigeria, and Togo, are responsible for costs of repatriating trafficking victims.¹⁹⁰¹ Some trafficking cases have been hampered because repatriation of the victims occurred before the traffickers were brought to trial.¹⁹⁰² According

to UNICEF records from 2007 to 2009, 428 children were repatriated to their countries of origin and 67 were reintegrated into Gabon when repatriation was not an option.¹⁹⁰³ Cases may take up to 2 years to be resolved.¹⁹⁰⁴

The Government conducts maritime surveillance of the country's over 2000 kilometer-long coastline, but these efforts have not prevented trafficking by sea; instead, traffickers have simply changed their routes.¹⁹⁰⁵

Government Policies on the Worst Forms Child Labor

Gabon's UN Development Assistance Framework 2007-2011 includes the goal of bringing national legislation into alignment with the country's bilateral and regional agreements to combat child trafficking, as well as ILO Convention 182 and other international conventions that it has ratified.¹⁹⁰⁶

The Government published its National Procedures Manual for identifying and assisting trafficking victims, and disseminated the guidelines to all appropriate agencies and partners.¹⁹⁰⁷

While policy is focused on the established problem of child trafficking, there is no evidence that the government has conducted research to determine the extent and nature of other worst forms of child labor that may be occurring in Gabon.

Social Programs to Eliminate or Prevent the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Government efforts to combat the worst forms of child labor focus primarily on trafficking issues.¹⁹⁰⁸ During the reporting period, the Government established child protection centers in Franceville, Moanda, Tchibanga, and opened six centers for street children.¹⁹⁰⁹ The Government funds centers for trafficking victims (both children and adults) and assumes financial responsibility for their care; foreign victims waiting to return to their home countries receive food, shelter, medical care, family tracing, counseling, and schooling.¹⁹¹⁰

The Government maintained and advertised its telephone hotline to assist child trafficking victims with leaflets and posters entitled, “STOP child exploitation,” distributed by the Interministerial Committee.¹⁹¹¹ In cooperation with UNICEF, the Government collected data on several issues, including the exploitation of children for commercial sex and labor. The results of the study have not yet been released.¹⁹¹² UNICEF also facilitated increased collaboration

between Gabon and several other African countries to develop standard procedures for repatriating foreign trafficking victims. As one result, Gabon and Benin finalized a bilateral agreement to repatriate trafficking victims and protect them from being re-trafficked.¹⁹¹³ During the reporting period, the Government trained service providers, including social workers, labor inspectors, local police, and government officials, who work directly on trafficking issues.¹⁹¹⁴

Based on the reporting above, the following actions would advance the reduction of the worst forms of child labor in Gabon:

IN THE AREA OF LAWS AND REGULATIONS:

- Adopt and make publicly available a list of hazardous occupations prohibited for children under 18.

IN THE AREA OF COORDINATION AND ENFORCEMENT:

- Allocate sufficient resources to the Interministerial Committee for the Fight Against Child Exploitation to facilitate investigation of all reported child labor cases, interagency coordination, and policy development.
- Gather, analyze, and disseminate child labor enforcement information with a view toward assessing the adequacy and appropriate allocation of available resources.

IN THE AREA OF POLICIES:

- Use a national statistical survey to better determine the extent and nature of the worst forms of child labor in Gabon and assess the need for additional policies to combat them.

¹⁸⁸⁰ Data provided in the chart at the beginning of this country report are not available from the data sources that are used by USDOL. 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. For more information on sources used for these statistics, the definition of working children, and other indicators used in this report, please see the “Children’s Work and Education Statistics: Sources and Definitions” section.

¹⁸⁸¹ U.S. Department of State, “Gabon (Tier 2 Watch List),” in *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2010*, Washington, DC, June 14, 2010; available from <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/142983.pdf>. See also U.S. Department of State, “Gabon (Tier 2 Watch List),” in *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2009*, Washington, DC, June 16, 2009; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2009/index.htm>. See also U.S. Department of State, “Gabon,” in *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2009*, Washington, DC, March 11, 2010, section 6; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/af/135954.htm>. See also Antoine Lawson, “Gabon cracks down on child trafficking,” *Mail and Guardian*, February 25, 2005;

available from <http://www.mg.co.za/article/2005-02-25-gabon-cracks-down-on-child-trafficking>. See also Antoine Lawson, “Rights-Gabon: Hopefully, the Beginning of the End for Child Traffickers”, *allAfrica.com*, [online], February 24, 2005 [cited January 29, 2009]; available from <http://allafrica.com/stories/200502240606.html>. See also U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports- 2009: Gabon,” section 6.

¹⁸⁸² ILO Committee of Experts, *Individual Observation concerning Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) Gabon (ratification: 2001)*, [online] 2009 [cited February 17, 2010]; available from [http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/pdconv.pl?host=status01&textbase=iloeng&document=11117&chapter=6&query=\(Gabon\)+@ref+%2B+%23YEAR%3E2008&highlight=&querytype=bool&context=0](http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/pdconv.pl?host=status01&textbase=iloeng&document=11117&chapter=6&query=(Gabon)+@ref+%2B+%23YEAR%3E2008&highlight=&querytype=bool&context=0).

¹⁸⁸³ ILO Committee of Experts, *Individual Observation concerning Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No.182) Gabon (ratification: 2001)*, [online] 2006 [cited February 17, 2010]; available from <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/pdconv.pl?host=status01&textbase=iloeng&document=8875&chapter=6&query=%28Gabon%29+%40ref+%2B+%23YEAR%3E2003&highlight=&querytype=bool&context=0>.

¹⁸⁸⁴ U.S. Department of State, “Trafficking in Persons Report- 2010: Gabon.” See also U.S. Department of State, “Trafficking in Persons Report- 2009: Gabon.” See also U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports- 2009: Gabon,” section 6. See also Lawson, “Gabon cracks down on child trafficking.” See also Lawson, “Beginning of the End for Child Traffickers”. See also U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports- 2009: Gabon,” section 6.

¹⁸⁸⁵ U.S. Embassy- Libreville official, E-mail communication to USDOL official, March 1, 2010, 4. See also Integrated Regional Information Networks, “Gabon: Laws Fail to Curb Child Trafficking Racket”, IRINnews.org, [online], February 4, 2005 [cited February 18, 2010]; available from <http://irinnews.org/print.asp?ReportID=45400>.

¹⁸⁸⁶ U.S. Department of State, “Trafficking in Persons Report- 2009: Gabon.” See also U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports- 2009: Gabon,” section 6. See also U.S. Embassy- Libreville official, E-mail communication, March 1, 2010, 4.

¹⁸⁸⁷ U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports- 2009: Gabon,” section 7d.

¹⁸⁸⁸ U.S. Department of State, “Trafficking in Persons Report- 2009: Gabon.”

¹⁸⁸⁹ Government of Gabon, *Code du travail*, Loi no 3/94, (November 21, 1994), articles 6, 82, and 177; available from <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/WEBTEXT/39615/64948/F94GAB01.htm>.

¹⁸⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, articles 4, 82, and 177.

¹⁸⁹¹ U.S. Department of State, “Trafficking in Persons Report- 2009: Gabon.”

¹⁸⁹² Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, “Gabon,” in *Child Soldiers Global Report 2008*, London, 2008; available from <http://www.child-soldiers.org/library/global-reports>.

¹⁸⁹³ U.S. Department of State, “Trafficking in Persons Report- 2009: Gabon.”

¹⁸⁹⁴ U.S. Embassy- Libreville, *reporting*, February 5, 2010, para 2c(1).

¹⁸⁹⁵ U.S. Embassy- Libreville, *reporting*, February 19, 2010, 5, 12.

¹⁸⁹⁶ U.S. Embassy- Libreville, *reporting*, February 5, 2010, para 2c(4)-2c(5).

¹⁸⁹⁷ U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports- 2009: Gabon,” section 7d.

¹⁸⁹⁸ ILO Committee of Experts, *Individual Observation C182: Gabon (2009)*.

¹⁸⁹⁹ U.S. Embassy- Libreville, *reporting*, February 5, 2010, para 2c(6)-2c(10).

¹⁹⁰⁰ U.S. Embassy- Libreville, *reporting*, February 24, 2009, 3.

¹⁹⁰¹ U.S. Embassy- Libreville official, E-mail communication, March 1, 2010.

¹⁹⁰² U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports- 2009: Gabon,” section 6. See also U.S. Embassy- Libreville, *reporting*, February 24, 2009, 3.

¹⁹⁰³ U.S. Embassy - Libreville, *reporting*, February 19, 2010.

¹⁹⁰⁴ U.S. Embassy- Libreville, *reporting*, February 5, 2010, para 2c(11), 2d(11).

¹⁹⁰⁵ U.S. Department of State, “Trafficking in Persons Report- 2010: Gabon.”

¹⁹⁰⁶ Government of Gabon, *Plan cadre des Nations Unies pour l’aide au développement 2007-2011, Gabon*, Geneva, March 31, 2006, 16; available from http://www.undg.org/archive_docs/8099-UNDAF-Gabon_2007-2011.pdf.

¹⁹⁰⁷ U.S. Embassy- Libreville official, E-mail communication, March 1, 2010.

¹⁹⁰⁸ U.S. Embassy- Libreville, *reporting*, February 5, 2010, para 2f(3), 2c(14).

¹⁹⁰⁹ U.S. Embassy- Libreville, *reporting*, February 19, 2010, 2.

¹⁹¹⁰ *Ibid.* See also U.S. Embassy- Libreville official, E-mail communication, March 1, 2010.

¹⁹¹¹ U.S. Department of State, “Trafficking in Persons Report- 2010: Gabon.”

¹⁹¹² U.S. Embassy- Libreville, *reporting*, February 19, 2010, 2.

¹⁹¹³ U.S. Embassy- Libreville, *reporting*, February 24, 2009, section 25-G.

¹⁹¹⁴ U.S. Embassy- Libreville official, E-mail communication, March 1, 2010, 1.