

Committee on the Application of Standards

Date: 12 May 2026

Governments appearing on the list of individual cases have the opportunity, if they so wish, to supply written information to the Committee.

► Information on the application of ratified Conventions supplied by governments on the list of individual cases

Mali (ratification: 2000)

Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182)

The Government has provided the following written information.

In response to the 2025 observations of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations regarding the application of the Convention, the Committee has raised concerns regarding the forced recruitment of children in armed conflict in Mali. With regard to respect for fundamental human rights, it should be recalled that, from independence to the present day, all Governments of the Republic of Mali have accorded constitutional status to the promotion of those rights with a view to firmly establishing their legal basis. Despite the efforts made, the matter of protecting the rights of children and vulnerable persons in the context of the asymmetric armed conflict between the Malian Armed Forces and armed groups continues to be raised regularly by the ILO.

In fulfilling its sovereign mission, the military has for several years lawfully ensured the defence of Mali's territorial integrity and the protection of citizens and their property in accordance with specific legislation, in particular Act No. 04-051 of 23 November 2004 establishing the general organization of national defence and Ordinance No. 2023-15 of 21 March 2023, as amended, issuing the general conditions of service of military personnel. It should be recalled that section 3(3) of the general provisions governing the conditions of service of military personnel sets the age of recruitment in the armed forces at 18 years. Pursuant to that statutory provision, the State of Mali ensures that no child under 18 years of age may be recruited into the Malian armed forces. This provision is reinforced by the Constitution of 22 July 2023 and by the provisions of Act No. 01-081 of 24 August 2001 on the criminal responsibility of minors and the establishment of juvenile courts, Act No. 2024-027 of 13 December 2024 establishing the Penal Code and Act No. 2024-027 of 13 December 2023 establishing the Code of Criminal Procedure, all of which set the age of criminal responsibility at 18 years. Further, section 242-85 of the Penal Code specifically criminalizes and punishes the recruitment and use of children by armed forces and groups.

Therefore, we maintain that this information regarding the use of children by our armed forces, including in “support missions”, requires verification and does not reflect the reality of the situation. For the Government of Mali, children associated with armed groups cannot be considered combatants; on the contrary, they are victims.

At the operational level, the National Directorate for the Promotion of Children and the Family (DNPEF) provided care for 1,432 children who left armed groups between 2013 and 2025, including 914 children in the 2023–25 period alone. These measures reflect the effective implementation of the legal and constitutional prohibition on the recruitment of children. The implementation of the Young Former Combatants–Young Agent of Change (JRA–JAC) project has facilitated the socio-economic reintegration of former child combatants; the annual organization of 400 consultation forums with religious, traditional and community leaders in Bamako has helped to raise public awareness; the implementation of intercommunity and interfaith dialogues in five regions has strengthened the promotion of peace and social cohesion; the construction of four de-radicalization centres (Mopti, Gao, Ségou and San) has facilitated the socio-economic reintegration of vulnerable young people; and the establishment of the Directorate for the Judicial Protection of Children has strengthened the protection and socio-professional integration of children.

Prohibition of begging

Begging by minors is punishable under section 242-91 of the 2023 Penal Code. The Government has also taken measures under the Child Protection Code and the Penal Code to provide for sufficiently dissuasive penalties against the practice of begging. Under the provisions of section 242-91 of the Penal Code, any person who is convicted of incitement to begging shall be liable to a sentence of six months of imprisonment. However, if the person incited to engage in begging is a minor, the sentence shall be one year of imprisonment. The Government will spare no effort in ensuring the effective implementation of these various pieces of legislation.

Prohibition of slavery, the sale and trafficking of children

Article 3 of the Constitution provides that: “The State shall ensure the protection of children against trafficking in persons and related offences, and against recruitment into violent extremist groups”. The smuggling of minor migrants is punishable under section 324-47 of the Penal Code, and trafficking of children is punishable under section 324-52 of the Penal Code. Act No. 2019-056 of 5 December 2019 on the suppression of cybercrime provides for and punishes online abuse and exploitation of children. With regard to the prohibition of the procuring of a child for prostitution, child sex tourism is punishable under section 327-8 of the Penal Code, child pornography is treated as forced pornography, which is punishable under section 327-7 of the Penal Code, and the sexual harassment of a minor is punishable under section 327-6 of the Penal Code.

Street children

Every year, advocacy events are organized to mark the International Day for Street Children (12 April). Article 11 of the Constitution provides that: “Every citizen shall have the right to education. Public education shall be compulsory, free of charge and secular. Private education is recognized and shall be provided under the conditions established by law”. In addition, basic education (from 6 to 17 years of age) is compulsory for all children.

With regard to the measures taken between 2021 and 2025 to overcome obstacles and make free and compulsory basic education a reality, Mali has introduced several policies aimed

at ensuring the effective provision of free basic education, in particular through the second generation Ten-Year Programme for the Development of Education and Vocational Training (PRODEC 2) 2019–28 and the national teaching policy. To improve the situation, the State took several measures between 2021 and 2025, including recruiting and training teachers, building and renovating schools, promoting education for all (particularly for girls and vulnerable children), using radio and technology to deliver lessons, and implementing national education programmes.

With regard to the use, procuring or offering of children under 18 years of age for illicit activities in general, the Government draws the Committee's attention to legislation on the control of drugs and infusers, namely Act No. 01 078 of 18 July 2001, which remains in force. Additionally, on 15 August 2022 the Government adopted an inter-ministerial order prohibiting the import, distribution, sale and use of shishas (hookahs) and all other similar appliances. These two pieces of legislation place strict controls on drugs, their precursors, narcotics and other substances defined therein, with breaches subject to severe penalties. None of these provisions permits the use of children in the production, supply or sale of drugs. Copies of these two texts will be included in an appendix to the coming detailed report. Nevertheless, the Government undertakes to consult the social partners with a view to the adoption of adequate legislative provisions prohibiting the use, procuring or offering of children under 18 years of age for illicit activities, in particular for the production, supply and sale of drugs.

Hazardous work and effective and time-bound measures. Children working in traditional gold panning

The implementation period of the National Programme to Combat Child Labour (PANETEM) 2011–20 was marked considerably by a social, political and security crisis in the country. Moreover, the round table of donors did not take place, and the disbursements of the funds planned by the main actors could not be undertaken properly, which had a sizable impact on efforts to implement the programme.

Between 2012 and 2020, however, the National Unit against Child Labour (CNLTE), in partnership with a number of state bodies (ministries responsible for promoting women, children and families; the Ministry of Justice; the Ministry of Education; the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture) and non-state bodies (the Office, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)), along with certain social partners (the National Union of Education and Culture (SNEC)) and civil society organizations, has undertaken significant activities to remove children from the worst forms of labour in traditional gold panning and to rehabilitate them and integrate them into society. Information on the progress made and the results obtained in that regard are included in the PANETEM 2011–20 evaluation report. The Government, working with the Office, has worked to draw up and adopt a second PANETEM, the draft of which has already been completed and was the subject of an initial interministerial meeting on 25 March 2025 which recommended submitting a written communication on the results of the PANETEM 2011–20 to the Council of Ministers before presenting its second iteration, backed by the national labour policy, for adoption. With the Office's assistance, the PANETEM 2011–20 evaluation workshop was planned for 27 and 28 April 2026 in Bamako, although the terrorist attacks that occurred in the country on 25 April 2026 prevented it from taking place. A new date will be identified once the security situation allows the workshop to be held.

Access to free basic education

The Government, with the support of technical and financial partners, has drawn up PRODEC 2 to cover the 2019–28 period, accompanied by a budgeted, multi-year plan of action for 2019–22 which constitutes the first phase in PRODEC 2's implementation and allows the activities undertaken to be highlighted each year and trends in the follow-up indicators presented. To that end, an annual performance report is produced and presented during joint education and vocational training sectoral technical reviews. As part of implementation and monitoring efforts, PRODEC 2 is based on the Education Funding Simulation Model (MSFE) 2016–30, a matrix of risks and mitigation scenarios, and a framework for measuring results.

Following the implementation of the five programmes that make up PRODEC 2, the main progress achieved between 2019 and 2023 in relation to the functioning of the education system and improvements to access are as follows: in terms of basic education, one of the most evident strengths is the vitality of the education system which, beyond the formal sectors, is based on education options that enjoy significant support from the State, communities, children and partners, which do not hesitate to contribute substantial funds to them; and with regard to access, in 2023 the gross enrolment rates for preschool for boys and girls were highest in Bamako, at 17.11 per cent and 17.77 per cent respectively, while the rate among girls in Koulikoro was higher than the national average, 7.14 per cent. At the first stage of basic education, the gross enrolment rate rose from 81.92 per cent to 83.23 per cent between 2019 and 2023, an increase of 1.31 percentage points.

The best gross enrolment rates for girls were achieved in 2020 (82.32 per cent) and 2023 (80.39 per cent), increasing the gender parity index by 0.02 percentage points between 2019 and 2023, with a peak in 2023. The rate of 83.23 per cent, which exceeds the anticipated target of 77.5 per cent in the MSFE under PRODEC 2 by 5.73 percentage points, demonstrates that significant effort has been made and that the current direction of travel should be maintained.

The Government reaffirms its commitment to meeting its constitutional obligations arising from the ratification of the Convention, and more detailed information will be provided in its 2026 regular report as well as in its answers to the direct request made in 2025 by the Committee of Experts. We hope that these responses will be of interest to the Committee with regard to the individual case concerning Mali and that Mali will not be included in the final list of cases to be examined during the Conference.