

Mauritius

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

The Government of Mauritius is currently in consultation with relevant social partners to develop a comprehensive policy on child labor.¹⁶²⁷ The Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development, and Family Welfare and the Ministry of Labor's Education and Training branch have programs to inform and sensitize the public on labor legislation and the prevention of child employment.¹⁶²⁸

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

In 1999, the ILO estimated that 2.2 percent of children between the ages of 10 and 14 in Mauritius were working.¹⁶²⁹ The Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development, and Family Welfare reports that in 1998, 2,000 children between the ages of 12 and 14 were either employed or looking for work.¹⁶³⁰ Child labor is usually found in street trade, small businesses, and in agriculture.¹⁶³¹ On the island of Rodrigues, children are found working in homes, on farms, and in shops.¹⁶³² There are reports of girls being sexually exploited as prostitutes, some as young as 13 years old. In 1999, reports indicated that children from Madagascar were trafficked to Mauritius for prostitution.¹⁶³³

According to the Education Act, primary schooling is compulsory and free.¹⁶³⁴ In 1997, the gross primary enrollment rate was 106 percent, and the net primary enrollment rate was 97.6 percent.¹⁶³⁵

¹⁶²⁷ Responses to child labor questionnaire by the Ministry of Labour and Industrial Relations for the Republic of Mauritius, September 13, 2001 [hereinafter Child labor questionnaire].

¹⁶²⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶²⁹ *World Development Indicators 2001* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2001) [CD-ROM] [hereinafter *World Development Indicators 2001*].

¹⁶³⁰ *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2000—Mauritius* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of State, 2001) [hereinafter *Country Reports 2000*], Section 6d, at <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2000/af/index.cfm?docid=857>.

¹⁶³¹ Child labor questionnaire.

¹⁶³² *Country Reports 2000* at Section 6d.

¹⁶³³ Ibid.

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Labor Act of 1975 sets the minimum age for employment at 15 years.¹⁶³⁶ Under the Occupational Safety, Health and Welfare Act of 1989, children between the ages of 15 and 18 are allowed to work in hazardous work settings provided they are trained to operate machinery and are supervised by another individual who also has training in using the same machinery.¹⁶³⁷ The Criminal Code as amended in 1998 contains provisions prohibiting child prostitution, and the sale, trafficking and abduction of children. Penalties for persons operating brothels are fines not to exceed 100,000 rupees (USD 3,340) and imprisonment up to 5 years, and penalties for persons convicted of the sale, trafficking, or abduction of a child are at least 10,000 rupees (USD 334) or a prison sentence up to 5 years.¹⁶³⁸ Forced labor outside the Export Processing Zone is also illegal.¹⁶³⁹

The Ministry of Labor and Industrial Relations is the government agency that oversees the enforcement of child labor laws. There are 39 labor inspectors and 8 labor officers whose duties include investigating child labor practices. In 2000, 5,277 child labor inspections were conducted. From January to June 2001, 2,421 child labor inspections were conducted.¹⁶⁴⁰

Mauritius ratified ILO Convention 138 on July 30, 1990, and ILO Convention 182 on June 8, 2000.¹⁶⁴¹

¹⁶³⁴ Child labor questionnaire. Children begin primary school at the age of 5 and are expected to complete primary education at age 12.

¹⁶³⁵ *World Development Indicators 2001*.

¹⁶³⁶ Child labor questionnaire. The country's child labor laws cover all sectors.

¹⁶³⁷ *Ibid.* Children are not required to clean machinery if this would expose them to the risk of injury.

¹⁶³⁸ *Ibid.* For currency conversion, see <http://www.carosta.de/frames/convert.htm> on 1/30/02.

¹⁶³⁹ *Country Reports 2000* at Section 6c.

¹⁶⁴⁰ Child labor questionnaire.

¹⁶⁴¹ ILOLEX database: Mauritius at <http://ilolex.ilo.ch:1567/cgi-lex/ratifce.pl?C138> and <http://ilolex.ilo.ch:1567/cgi-lex/ratifce.pl?C182>.

NOTE: Hard copies of all Web citations are on file.